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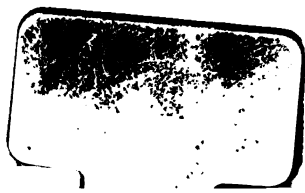
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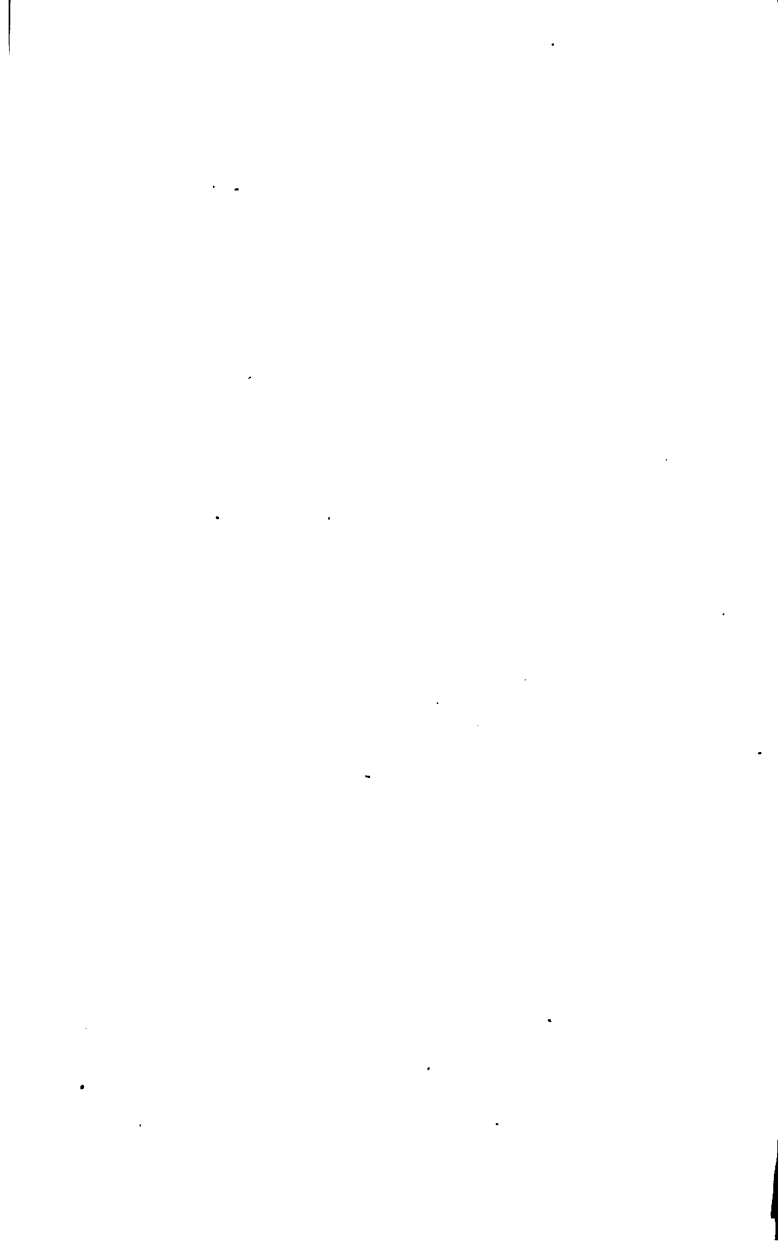


OR, THE
ADVENTURES OF A FAMILY
IN THE
WILDS
OF
AFRICA



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P. 130.

Pierre escapes from the Elephant.

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THE CASTAWAYS;

OR, THE

Adventures of a Family in the Wilds of Africa.

BY

ANNE BOWMAN,

AUTHOR OF

"*ESPERANZA*," "*ROLANDO'S TRAVELS*:" SECOND SERIES, ETC.

"Earth with her thousand voices praises God."—COLERIDGE.

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PREFACE.

So long as man shall continue blest with the gift of imagination, the taste for works of fiction must exist. It is the office of the teacher of youth to render this bias subservient to moral improvement, that the flowery path may lead to the temple of virtue rather than the dark abodes of evil.

To aid this purpose it is desirable to implant in the minds of the young a taste for natural objects, to encourage them to look, with a microscopic eye, on the faultless works of creation, and thus to foster love and veneration for the Mighty Creator, whose creatures are ever perfect, and far beyond the works of man's hand, or man's imagination.

To forward this end, the author has successfully given former works to the public, and again ventures to offer such a tale of adventure as may captivate the fancy, while lessons of useful knowledge and examples of piety and morality may improve the understanding, elevate the heart, and lead youth to walk

Amid the glad creation, musing praise,
And looking lively gratitude.



THE CASTAWAYS.



CHAPTER I.

Plans of the Travellers. The Mountains of the Moon. Embark in the *Madras*. The Cabin Dinner-party. Ancient History of Africa. Mr. Marshall, the Mate. A Discourse on Languages and Household Arts.

"How dull England is! We must start off again; but where in the world shall we turn our steps in search of adventures?" said Charles Staunton to his friend Albert Beaumont.

"The foot of man has profaned every remote nook of the world," answered Albert; "and if we really seek novel adventures, there is nothing for it but a journey to the moon."

"A happy suggestion!" exclaimed his lively friend: "the very thing, Albert! We will penetrate to the Mountains of the Moon—the *Lunæ Montes* of the ancients; the *Djebel Kumri* of the Arabs; the haunt of those tricky spirits denominated genii in the East, and giants or dwarfs in the West; the mysterious boundary of discovery beyond which man has never ventured. We will decidedly make the grand attempt; we may emancipate some spell-bound princess,

discover a gold-mine, or slay a dragon. Let us set out to-morrow, if you love me, Albert."

"I am contented to follow your adventurous career," answered Albert, laughing at his friend's enthusiasm; "but in which direction shall we approach this region of wonders? Shall we renew our acquaintance with our sprightly friends the French, in subjugated Algiers?—shall we venture to force our way through the Kaffirs and Bushmen of the south?—shall we hazard health and life itself among the dismal swamps of the West; or attempt to penetrate from the bare and rocky shores of the East?"

"Albert, you are disappointing," replied Charles. "I flattered myself we were about to explore unknown regions; to write the true history of Timbuctoo the marvellous, to discover the lost tribes, or at least the unicorn of tradition; and, in your profound knowledge, you seem already as familiar with the dangerous shores and scorching plains of Africa as you are with the polished cities of Europe."

"The entire coast of Africa," said Albert, "has been surveyed, and, where it was expedient, visited by navigators, who have given us the result of their observations; but the interior has much to excite enterprise and reward research. Perhaps our most prudent plan would be to embark in a vessel bound to Alexandria."

"Spare me the infliction of Egypt!" cried Charles. "I know what you are going to urge; 'Alexandria, the city of a thousand associations; designed by the mighty conqueror to be the capital of his empire of the world; the school of ancient learning; the sanc-

tuary of modern barbarism.' Why, my dear fellow, I know every foot of the sacred ground already: I should not feel the slightest astonishment at the sight of the Pyramids; nor have any pleasure in being duped by a made-up mummy from the Catacombs. Egypt is too civilized and modern for our plan."

"But a voyage up the Nile!—the dear old Nile, Charles, must surely be interesting," pursued his friend.

"Before we could arrive, Albert," answered Charles, "there will be rival steamboats plying up the old river, and the *Pink* and the *Rose* would hail us with cries of 'Who's for Essout? who's for Thebes? at the small charge of fifty piastres?'"

"I yield, I yield," cried Albert, laughing. "I give up Egypt, and propose that we should, in the first instance, explore the first page of the *Times*, for any outward-bound vessel likely to suit us."

And the very same day the two friends began in earnest their inquiries and their preparations. Both were orphans, without any near ties to bind them to England; and blest with youth, health, and ample riches, they felt free as air to wing their flight in search of the great desire of youth, novelty. Though neither was more than twenty-four years of age, they had travelled together over great part of Europe, had visited Asia, and hunted moose-deer in America. Albert, the oldest and most thoughtful, had always been the manager and director of affairs; and his judgment and promptness, with the magical aid of money, soon procured all the necessaries, and even luxuries, which they deemed necessary for their expe-

dition. A portable tent, camp cooking-apparatus, and the numerous convenient travelling appendages which modern art has rendered easy to transport, with arms and ammunition for defence, as well as for sport, were all ready in two or three days. In the mean time, attracted by the advertisement of "a fast-sailing ship for the Cape and Madras, with elegant accommodations for passengers," to sail in a few days ; and knowing Captain Stockport, who commanded the vessel, to be an intelligent, worthy man, and a capital sailor, they made up their minds to take passage with him at once rather than wait for the India steamer, which, as Charles said, "was always as uncomfortable as a crowded hotel."

They agreed each to take a servant, Charles selecting Pierre, a French valet, and Albert prevailing on John Scott, a Yorkshire groom, to accompany him.

"Why you should take a groom, Albert," said his friend, "I cannot comprehend ; I conclude that in the interior we shall have to travel on camels, elephants, or oxen, and John has no experience in grooming such cattle."

"You are mistaken," answered Albert ; "I hope at the Cape we shall be able to purchase a stud of hunters for our sporting expedition to the North. Camels we shall scarcely meet with south of the equator ; nor, though the docile elephant abounds in the forests of the interior, have the natives yet subdued it, and bent its mighty powers to their service. They hunt the animal, eat its flesh, and collect its tusks for the purpose of traffic ; but if our horses fail in the desert, we shall not meet with an elephant to bear us over the

sandy plains : even John, who has trained a wild colt in South America, would not undertake to break in an elephant ; but he is a useful fellow,—faithful, honest, and hardy, and, moreover, has as great a taste for travelling as his master ; therefore, my dear Charles, I count on as good service from him as you can rationally expect from the elegant M. Pierre.”

“His great recommendation is being a good cook,” replied Charles, “a tolerable laundry-man on an emergency, and a merry fellow, who can amuse you when you are tired. Then he was in Algiers with the French army for a short time, where he picked up a little Arabic, which may be useful in our wanderings. I believe he must have been dismissed for cowardice, for he is certainly a notorious poltroon. But now, Albert, I trust to you : is all the baggage embarked ?” Albert assuring him all was cared for, Charles proceeded : “Now let us call on Captain Stockport, to inquire when we must be at Portsmouth, and who are to be our fellow-passengers. Stockport is a capital fellow himself, and is chary in accepting passengers, so we may depend on meeting respectable society ; and if there should happen to be any young ladies bound to the land of matrimonial hopes, we must just make the best of it.”

On a lovely morning in September the two friends embarked at Portsmouth on board the *Madras*, full of energy and hope ; but some days elapsed before the passengers recovered sufficiently from the usual unpleasant effects of the commencement of a voyage to meet at Captain Stockport’s well-furnished dinner-table, and be ceremoniously introduced to each other.

The most striking person was Mrs. Churchill, a tall, noble-looking woman, who was accompanied by her two young daughters, her niece Maude Seyton, an elegant-looking girl of seventeen years of age, and her two nephews.

Mrs. Churchill had been for many years in India with her husband ; from whence she had sent over her children when very young to England, to be educated in a more favourable climate. Colonel Churchill's regiment had subsequently been removed to the Cape, and from thence, on hearing of the ill-health of her only son, the intrepid lady had proceeded to England, accompanied only by her faithful old nurse, and by Abdalla, a negro, long attached to the family, and the drum-major of the regiment, but spared from his duties by the colonel, that he might attend his mistress on her voyage. In England Mrs. Churchill had buried her son, and, determined not to be longer separated from the two children she had remaining, she was now on her return to Cape Town with them and a very superior governess.

Miss Keenmark, the governess, was a clever-looking, small woman, who wore spectacles, spoke learnedly, and always carried a set of tablets in her hand, on which she made notes of the passing conversation, to the great dismay of the bashful.

Julia Churchill was fourteen, and her sister Margaret a year younger ; they were both amiable, and as well instructed as most school-girls : but their knowledge was chiefly derived from books ; until this time they had seen little of the world. Their cousin Maude, an orphan heiress, had already mixed with society ; she

had been left to the charge of Mrs. Churchill, and had chosen to leave England with her aunt. Hubert, her eldest brother, though only fifteen, had obtained a commission in his uncle's regiment, and was now on his way to join ; and Edmund, a year younger, a delicate boy, came also, unwilling to be separated from his only relatives.

The dinner-table was completed by Dr. Cameron, an old friend of the captain, who had accepted the charge of the health of the passengers during his voyage to India ; and by Mr. Pinchard, a thin, pale, diminutive man, who held some civil station at Madras, but had been to England to recruit his health. Captain Stockport, being acquainted with some of his friends, had consented to take him as a passenger, with the permission of Mrs. Churchill, who had secured all the accommodation the vessel afforded, except that reserved for Charles and Albert.

Mr. Pinchard appeared to have suffered longer and more severely than the rest from the terrible seasickness ; and though he persisted in sending his plate for a portion of each new dish brought to table, he was reluctantly compelled to send everything away untasted, bemoaning his hard destiny, and regarding with unconcealed envy the healthy appetite of the rest of the guests.

"Take my advice, my friend," said Dr. Cameron ; "keep to your water-gruel a day or two longer, and avoid the sight of these temptations till you have appetite to enjoy them."

"It's very well for you, Dr. Cameron," replied the sick man, in a querulous tone ; "you are thriving on

your fowl and ham ; while I am no more than nine stone now ; and what shall I be if I go on longer starving on that abominable mess of oatmeal and warm water ?”

“ There is not a finer, healthier race in the world than the peasantry of my country, Mr. Pinchard ; and they live almost entirely on oatmeal *crowdie*,” continued Dr. Cameron.

“ Much good may it do them ! ” exclaimed the sufferer : “ I hope never more to taste, in any shape, that infernal oatmeal. I think I feel a little better, and should like to try one of those patties before you, madam,” addressing Mrs. Churchill ; “ may I trouble you to give me one ? ”

“ I shall not be accessory to such imprudence,” replied the lady, somewhat sternly. “ Young man, you look like a ghost ; and if you persist in being so wilful, you must be restrained. Take the good doctor’s advice, and leave the table ; the sight of the food will only aggravate the disorder of your stomach.”

Somewhat intimidated by the lady’s commanding tone, Mr. Pinchard retired ; and Dr. Cameron thanked Mrs. Churchill for her useful interference.

“ I hope, madam,” continued he, “ that we shall become good friends during our long voyage ; I know these seas well, having often traversed them, and I shall be glad to explain to these quiet young ladies all the wonders we may encounter.”

“ I suppose,” said Hubert, “ it will not be many days before we get a glimpse of the shores of Africa.”

“ I hope we shall see little of Africa,” answered Captain Stockport, “ till we touch at Sierra Leone.

I have a particular aversion to the ugly coast of the west, and shall keep as far off as current and wind will let me."

"But, nevertheless, Captain Stockport," said Charles, "these young ladies, who have been reading up for the occasion, are naturally impatient to look at the land of wonders."

"Libya—the far-famed Libya of the ancients," began Miss Keenmark, "the land of magic and learning, the scene of Scripture miracles, of Grecian mythology, of Roman prowess, has in all ages been a temptation to the ambition, the cupidity, or the curiosity of adventurers, and ever the grave of their hopes."

"But these adventurers, even from the beginning, madam," said Albert, "have continually added to our knowledge of the yet but half-explored country. Herodotus details the Phœnician expedition, and modern authority decides that these ancient mariners in their rude galleys actually succeeded in circumnavigating Africa; and in addition to his own interesting observations in the north of the country, the historian reports this voyage from the account given to him by the Egyptian priests."

"They lived to return," said the governess; "and were thus more fortunate than the intrepid and honourable travellers of modern days, of whom a long catalogue of lamented and honourable victims proclaim the perilous nature of African adventure."

"And yet, madam," said Dr. Cameron, "you have been bold enough to dare these dangers."

"I understand that the climate of the south is less

fatal to Europeans than that of the interior of the continent," replied the lady. "Beyond this consideration, beyond even my attachment to my pupils, I have been influenced by the desire to solve some geographical problems, and to view the southern termination of our hemisphere."

Dr. Cameron bowed very low, but did not answer the learned lady, who withdrew with her pupils; and Mrs. Churchill, looking at him very keenly, said, "Doctor, Miss Keenmark is an excellent woman, a good governess, and a faithful friend. You will discover her worth before we part."

In truth, it was not long before all the passengers learnt to value Miss Keenmark's kind and unselfish nature, and to pardon her little pedantry. Even Charles and Hubert left off "drawing out the governess" for their amusement, when they saw her unwearied devotion to her duties, and her gentle manner to all, not even excepting the discontented Mr. Pinchard.

The days passed pleasantly, the evenings were spent in music and cheerful amusements; the young party were somewhat alarmed in crossing the rolling sea of the Bay of Biscay, and much interested in sailing down the coast of Portugal; and before they reached the latitude of Africa the whole party had become intimately acquainted. They were favoured by the winds, and went gaily before the breeze, crossing the path of many a weary homeward-bound vessel, struggling against the wind. After passing the rocky shores of Madeira, they began to experience the gentle influence of a warmer latitude; warm English dresses

were laid aside for lighter garments ; and in the calm cool evening they loved to congregate on deck, and speculate on the distant islands or the unseen coasts past which they were voyaging.

"I must say, captain," observed Mr. Pinchard, at one of these meetings, "I do regret that you did not touch at Funchal. I am persuaded that the fresh fruit would have been serviceable to my health ; and I observe that the water we have on board is far from being pure."

Captain Stockport rarely answered Mr. Pinchard's murmurs and complaints. Now he whistled, and turning to Charles, who was a great favourite, pointed out to him the porpoises that were sporting about the ship.

"What frightful creatures !" exclaimed Edmund Seyton. "I feel very comfortable, Maude, that I refused to be a sailor, as grandpapa wished me. I like only beautiful and elegant creatures : I like birds and flowers, and still life. The desk will suit me better than the mast."

"Then you are no hero," said Julia. "You are no better than Mr. Pinchard."

"What an acquisition that energetic man would be," said Hubert, "in case of a storm or a shipwreck."

Dr. Cameron smiled, and said—"You must not alarm these young ladies, Mr. Seyton, by any tales of storms or wrecks. I hope we shall encounter no perils in this well-known sea, in a sound vessel, and with an experienced commander."

"For my part," said Julia, "I think it would be a charming adventure to be cast away on a desolate

island, where we might found a colony, and live in the woods."

"But we must have houses, Julia," said Margaret, "and who could build a house? Not poor feeble Mr. Pinchard; not Charles, or Hubert, or Edmund; even Mr. Beaumont, who is very clever, could scarcely build a house."

"You have no notion, young ladies," said Hubert, "what a very useful member of the colony I should be. At Addiscombe I was a first-class prizeman in fortification and engineering. I could lay out a town, fortify it, clear the roads, and superintend the sinking of wells admirably."

"Then, Hubert," said Albert Beaumont, who had joined the young party, "you must certainly be the engineer and architect of the colony; Charles must be the hunter, and I the farmer; Mr. Pinchard can superintend the commissariat, and Edmund, who prefers still life, can be the tailor and shoemaker."

"What a delightful cast!" exclaimed Maude.

"But what could we do?" said Margaret. "How useless we should be! We have not learnt to make a bed, as 'Harry and Lucy' were obliged to do; nor could we make a pie or a pudding. Only think, mamma, if we were really cast on a desolate island, what helpless creatures Julia and I should be."

"In such an unfortunate event," answered Mrs. Churchill, "we should probably have neither beds, pies, nor puddings to make. God avert such a calamity!" and rather uneasily she walked towards the captain and his mate, who were conversing together at a little distance. Then addressing the latter,—a tall, stout

man, with a fine open countenance, she said—"I hope, Mr. Marshall, you see no signs of storms in this dangerous latitude. I believe you are a sound judge of the indications of winds or calms."

"I reckon, madam," replied Marshall, "that I can see the coming of a storm as soon as the Almighty lets the eye of man see it, and as yet we have nothing to fear; but it needs to keep both eyes open at this season, and just where an awkward current or a rough gale might drive us nearer than we would like to one of the ugliest coasts I ever neared."

"You have had some experience of African coasts, I think, Marshall?" said Charles.

"I have, sir," answered he; "there are few coasts in this wide world that I don't know some little about, or could not make some good guesses concerning; but this Africa beats all I ever saw. I've been a month at a time at Mogador, which lies over yonder," pointing to the east, "and a ticklish time I had among them tawny, fierce, sulky Moors, who wouldn't care to put a knife into any man they thought was aught of a Christian. Pray God keep us all out of their claws! Then I've boated up the Gambia, with the captain of a slaver—God forgive me for it!—to buy up poor creatures as if they were so many cattle. Up there, when they were scarce of food, fathers would bring their own children to sell for a bag of grain or a few bottles of rum; an awful sight, ladies; but yet I will say that of the women, they mainly cried when they parted with their own flesh and blood; though a few red beads, or a flashy cotton handkerchief, soon set them on laughing again."

"You must have commenced your roving life at an early age, Mr. Marshall," said Albert, "for it appears you have visited many parts of the world."

"Why, you see, Mr. Beaumont," answered he, "I was decently brought up for a farmer's son, and always went to school, till, before I was twelve years old, I lost both father and mother. Then my uncle, who got the farm, took me from school, worked me from morn till night in the fields, and never could bear to see me with a book in my hands; and I liked reading, especially voyages and travels. He was a hard man, and when I was a year older, I could not stand it, and I ran off, got aboard a merchant at Liverpool, and was knocked about for years before I felt my feet firm on the plank. But I had a knack of picking up different tongues in the ports where we traded, so I came to be a useful man, and was pushed up."

"Pray, sir," asked Miss Keenmark, "with which of the modern languages do you profess to be acquainted?"

"Why, madam," answered Marshall, "to speak the truth, I should be a bit puzzled to reckon off all the different sorts of lingo that I have a smattering of; but set me down among any foreigners, and it's odds but, somehow, I can make my way with them."

"I can assure you, Miss Keenmark," said Albert, "that Mr. Marshall speaks Arabic better than he speaks English, and I, who am but a student of that language, have been indebted to him for much information."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed the lady. "I have myself long had an ambition to acquire a language which is the key of much profound learning, besides

being colloquially useful over such wide tracts of the globe. I would propose, Mrs. Churchill, with your permission, to form a class of young pupils for the acquisition of this elegant knowledge, and I would solicit the valuable aid of Mr. Beaumont as a professor of this language of ancient learning."

Albert, laughing at this appeal, begged to decline the honour of the professorship, and Mrs. Churchill said,—

"I think, Miss Keenmark, the girls are learning as many languages as their young brains can bear at once. Teach them anything useful ; but I really do not wish you to load their mind with lumber. Let us defer the Arabic till a more convenient season."

But Miss Keenmark vigorously attacked the Arabic, good-naturedly assisted by Albert and Marshall, and though her pupils were excused from sharing her studies, they were expected to be present at the readings, which they considered rather irksome.

"I don't think, mamma," said Margaret, after listening to the Arabic lesson one day, "that I have learnt much Arabic to-day. I have been thinking the whole time how many things there are of which we are quite ignorant."

"That is indeed too true, my dear child," said Miss Keenmark, eagerly ; "but you are yet young, and with earnest intention all difficulties may be overcome. Upon the solid foundation of the Latin language, which we are now laying, I hope to erect a noble superstructure : the modern tongues will spring naturally and easily from such a base ; and the glorious Greek, and even the sublime Hebrew, may crown the work."

"But will Greek and Hebrew be useful to us, Miss Keenmark?" asked Margaret. "You know I do love to learn useful things. I like to speak Italian with Mr. Beaumont, and French with Mr. Marshall, who says I am almost as good a scholar as he is."

"I protest against Mr. Marshall's French," said the alarmed governess; "his style and accent must alike be vicious; and you must allow, Mrs. Churchill, that on style and accent depend much of the grace and power of language."

"I leave the cultivation of languages entirely in your hands, Miss Keenmark," answered the mother; "but I should like to know what other useful things Margaret wishes to learn."

"I have long wished to know how bread was made," said Margaret; "and Norah took me to the cook, who was kind enough to show me how he made the buns and rolls for breakfast; a very curious process, I can assure you, mamma; and I felt that I was a great dunce not to know more of common things than I had read in books,—'that bread was made from flour,' or that 'butter was the produce of the cow.' Then Mr. Marshall took me to the helm, and explained to me how wonderfully the heavy ship was governed and directed. I like to know these things, mamma, though I may never have to be a cook, and certainly am not likely to be a sailor."

"In my younger days," said Mrs. Churchill, "I had more opportunities than you have had of learning the useful art of household economy. No woman should despise the knowledge by which she can un-

derstand and appreciate the labours of her servants. At a more favourable opportunity you shall learn these things."

"For my part," said Julia, "I should be perfectly contented to believe that the rolls and butter-pats were gathered from some fabulous tree, and that the meat was cooked by the wand of some gracious fairy. I love poetry and romance, and have no taste for household arts."

"You are a foolish girl, Julia," said her mother; "but I leave to my friend Miss Keenmark the task of reducing you to reason. I see, Dr. Cameron, you are laughing at my school-girls."

"I own the fact, my dear madam," said the doctor. "School-girls are a fine study, before the harsh dame Experience has fashioned them for the world. I was thinking how useful these two fair creatures would be in that fanciful desert isle on which they proposed the other day to be wrecked."

"Oh! we would have our servants wrecked with us," said Julia.

"A most sensible arrangement, if you can insure its completion," returned the doctor. "And now, ladies, for a walk on deck this fine evening, when we may look round and select a pleasant island for our adventure."

CHAPTER II.

The Walk on Deck. Seeing the Wind. The Storm in Earnest. The Cowards and the Brave. A Sight of the Coast. The Wreck. The Mutiny. The Escape in the Long-boat and landing on the Coast, and proposals to inspect the Country.

THE whole of the party were glad to leave the cabins for the open deck ; but this evening the air was sultry and unrefreshing, and a feeling of languor oppressed even the most active.

"Mr. Marshall," said Dr. Cameron, "these young ladies have a fancy for a storm and a shipwreck. Could you not call up a gale for them?"

"I wouldn't do it, if I could, doctor," answered Marshall. "We want a fair wind till we get within the tropics ; I have no great liking for this calm, and if I should see a light over yon way," pointing to the north-west, "I shall warn you that we may expect some weather."

Albert and Captain Stockport now joined them, and walked to some distance from the rest with Marshall and Dr. Cameron. They seemed in earnest conversation, and Mrs. Churchill gave a keen glance towards the party, and then turned round to look on the young people, who were watching with much curiosity the disturbed ocean.

"Is anything the matter, madam?" said Mr. Pinchard, with a pale countenance. "I cannot understand what people are looking for. I was led to

believe this was a safe ship. I hope Captain Stockport has not deceived me. Do you think, madam, it is all as it ought to be?"

"The vessel is stout, Mr. Pinchard," replied Mrs. Churchill, "but the Almighty hand can crush it in a moment, as a child crushes the paper boat its own hand has formed. Look at that mighty ocean, young man, and confess that it is God's breath alone that can waft the work of man safely over its boiling waves."

Mr. Pinchard shrunk back appalled, grasped a bulk-head for support, and asked no more questions.

"Do observe, Mr. Beaumont," said Julia, "the unusual appearance of the sea. The waves rear their lofty crests, and career like war-horses; yet the air is as still as death. Surely this must be what is called 'seeing a wind.'"

"You are quite right, young lady," said Captain Stockport, who was standing near, looking out through a glass. "There is no doubt that we do 'see wind,' which we could well dispense with here, south of the Canaries, where a vexatious current that sets in towards the shore is the plague of navigators. Now, Mr. Marshall, I see you are looking out for a gale; are we to have it?"

"Have it we shall, captain," said the mate. "Yon heavy, dark clouds that touch the water have a meaning."

He said no more, but Captain Stockport looked uneasy; these signs in the skies betokened a change; the barometer had fallen; and worst of all, as he said, he had no liking for the neighbourhood. "We must turn out the hands, Mr. Marshall," observed he.

The mate was prompt in duty ; the hands were soon engaged in active employment, the light canvas was taken in, and the topsails were ordered to be reefed. In the mean time, as the young people stood watching the tossing waves and the obscured sky with intense interest, Albert pointed out to them a bright line at the north-west, which shone below the clouds that darkened the horizon.

"There is Marshall's warning light !" exclaimed he. "We may depend on his sagacity, and look for the gale coming on. I would therefore advise you, young ladies, to descend to the cabins ; for we shall feel the wind as well as see it, before long, Julia."

It was with great reluctance the young party yielded to this prudent suggestion and the more peremptory command of Mrs. Churchill ; they were unwilling to leave a scene so novel and fascinating, and be confined below, where they could only speculate and wait the result. They had not long retired when a sharp cracking among the spars, an increased heaving of the vessel, and the loud roar of the wind, announced that the gale had come on. All the ladies assembled in the saloon, the terrified servants followed them, and Dr. Cameron joined them, and endeavoured to divert their minds from present danger by long stories of his voyages ; while Mr. Pinchard, who had been charitably admitted, lay stretched on a sofa in the deepest terror, and answered every moan of the tempest with a responsive groan.

The vessel gave a sudden heave, on which Angeline, the French attendant on Maude Seyton, fell on her knees, screaming aloud, "Ah ! Madame Shoorsheel !

Nous sommes éperdues ! Always, always, I say to Mees Seyton, it is not well to voyage, only upon de vessel of France ! de good vessel of France never drown ! never ! Always it marsh smoose ! ”

“ Be asy now, my purty cratur,” cried Norah, Mrs. Churchill’s nurse ; “ didn’t Abdalla say with his own mighty grand words, that he was the boy that would swim the water ? and if he got sight of a bit of land, isn’t it he that will swim up to it with my darlin’ childer, and set them on dry ground ; and, in coorse, come back for the misthress, plase God.”

The young men had entered while Norah was consoling the French girl, and Hubert said, “ I wish you only saw how the sea is boiling up now, Norah. Here, take care of Edmund, who is sick and half-frightened to death ; and make yourself sure Abdalla would never be able to breast such waves as are rising now, even if he had a spot of land to take you to.”

The young ladies looked pale and terrified at this report ; but Albert said,

“ There is nothing to alarm you so much ; Hubert loves to deal in the marvellous. This is but one of the usual gales of the season, which experienced mariners expect, and against which they take precautions. Let me recommend you to retire to your couches, and try to sleep ‘ rocked by the billows.’ ”

But to separate was painful, and to sleep impossible. They watched together through the tedious night, listening fearfully to the increased roaring of the winds and waves, and unable to divert their thoughts from the peril of their situation or to calm their terrors, except by the influence of united prayer. To

the watchers on deck the time moved still more tediously ; and the dim rays that preceded the break of day only showed more distinctly the increased power of the storm. The mountainous billows now dashed over and flooded the decks, carrying away spars, hencoops, and everything moveable.

The ship, forced onward by an unseen current, moved with uncontrollable velocity through the foaming waves, and Albert marked the captain's uneasy glances towards Marshall, as they earnestly looked from time to time towards the east for the tardy appearance of the dawn. Suddenly, a violent squall nearly prostrated the inexperienced voyagers, and at the same moment a loud report was heard ; the mainmast snapped by the board, and fell over the side with a tremendous crash, carrying with it the mizenmast, ropes and yards, and sweeping two unfortunate men into the boiling trough of the ocean. No aid could be given in such a fearful sea, the vessel flew before the gale, and the distressed men on deck saw no more of their unhappy comrades.

Albert and Charles, sickened at the sight of this accident, left the deck and descended to console their friends in the saloon, who were weeping and pale with apprehension. Mr. Pinchard had been pitched from his resting-place on the sofa, and was now lying on the floor, actually screaming with terror, believing that the ship was foundering. Charles attempted to rally the depressed spirits of his fair friends ; and Albert offered graver consolations and joined them in prayer for the aid of God. Then Mrs. Churchill, admonishing her young nephews to remain below,

insisted on accompanying Charles and Albert on deck, that she might herself see the extent of their danger. Clinging to her young protectors, she looked on the awful scene with a pale but calm countenance, and then addressing Captain Stockport, she said,

"What is the worst we have to dread, my good friend?"

The captain was silent, but pointed to the east, still dim with the undispeled clouds of night; and Mrs. Churchill shuddered, for she understood that the tremendous gale and the fatal current were hurrying the dismasted and powerless ship towards the ever-dreaded coast of western Africa. "And the chances of reaching the shore in this disabled vessel, and amidst the dangers of the coast?" demanded she, hastily.

"God forbid that we should be driven to such chance!" answered he.

"But danger must be looked in the face, if we desire to escape it," continued the determined lady. "Could you not put out a boat?"

"No boat could live in this sea," replied he; and then added, somewhat sternly, "Pray join your family, my good lady; you are out of your place here. Give us your prayers, if you will, but spare us your counsels; rely on us to do our best for you."

Mrs. Churchill was silent, and retired with her two friends. At the entrance of the saloon they encountered Mr. Pinchard, trembling in every limb, supported on one side by Pierre, almost as pale as himself, and on the other by John the groom, a stout and able help.

"What is it to do for de poor M. Peensard?" asked Pierre. "See, monsieur, he tremble!—he fear!—he die!—he be all at despair! is it dat we be all drown?"

Charles approached to inquire the state of the poor poltroon.

"Mr. Staunton," feebly articulated he, "you are a gentleman,—you are a Christian! tell me the meaning of all this. What madness of Captain Stockport not to land at Funchal, where we might have remained in safety till this frightful storm had passed away! Does he not remember that he is responsible for our lives!"

"Do you not remember, Mr. Pinchard," said Mrs. Churchill, "that Captain Stockport's own life is as precious to him as yours can be to you? He is responsible to God for that, and will not risk it unnecessarily."

"But what will become of me?" cried out the poor wretch, half-maddened with terror. "Oh, that I had remained in England! I was not fit to return to India,—and I am not fit to die."

"God knows best what is fit for us all," replied the lady; then, in a tone of authority, she added: "Go to your own apartments, sir, say your prayers, and leave your life or death in God's hand . . . Help him, Scott, he is not able to walk."

"He's a poor creater, madam," said John, "and was better fitted for a shop-board and a needle and thimble than for roughing it here among hard fellows. But he's somebody's bairn, so I'se e'en carry him off, poor silly chap, and put him to bed;" and lifting up the help-

less sufferer as if he had been an infant, the stout Yorkshireman bore him to his state room, and deposited him on his rocking couch.

Albert and Charles left Mrs. Churchill to the task of attempting to console the agitated females in the saloon, who were listening in terror to the roaring of the winds, the dashing of the heavy waves, and the creaking of the tossed vessel, and, accompanied by Dr. Cameron, hastened on deck to watch for daylight. At length the sun broke through the dense clouds, and anxious and fearful glances were directed towards the east. The experienced and keen-eyed seamen were the first to wear an uneasy aspect, as the increasing light revealed to them the appalling fact that the unabated wind and the strong current were urging on the unmanageable vessel towards the dreaded coast, now distinctly to be traced at not more than three miles' distance.

The howling wind, the foaming billows which ever and anon dashed over the decks,—the crippled vessel, and the sight of the fatal shore, maddened the less-experienced part of the crew ; they recklessly exposed themselves to peril, and one after another several sailors were hurled into the ocean, and perished without hope of aid.

Captain Stockport, perfectly composed, gave his orders with promptness and decision ; and Marshall, ever firm in duty, with some of the oldest hands, attempted to carry these orders into execution : but the greatest part of the men, in sullen defiance or in frantic desperation, abandoned themselves to intoxication and riot. At such a moment, all attempts to

check the mutiny would have been hopeless, while every moment they more plainly distinguished the terrible coast, dark and rocky, threatening inevitable destruction.

"The gale lulls a little!" cried Marshall; "we may yet save her, captain;" and the orders were given to sound. They sounded, and found twelve fathoms; all was yet safe, and the abating wind gave hope that an anchor might hold. Dr. Cameron once more went down to the unhappy party below to report to them new fears and new hopes. He found the ladies calm and resigned, and his own agitated feelings were soothed by the sight of woman's endurance, though he was aware that every moment increased the danger of the vessel. He had not been below many minutes, when loud cries on deck announced some new peril; Mrs. Churchill was rushing forward to learn the worst, but Dr. Cameron stopped her, and besought her to remain with her family. At that moment a violent shock prostrated the whole party, and they knew the ship had struck.

Pale as death, Albert Beaumont entered the cabin. "Do not despair," said he to the weeping females; "the ship has struck on a sand-bank, and must, I fear, be given up; but we have serviceable boats; and if the wind should subside, we might easily row to the shore, which is not more than a mile from us."

"And fall into the hands of the fierce Arabs," said Mrs. Churchill.

"We trust this may not be the case," answered he. "The coast appears deserted; and if we succeed in landing stores and necessaries to fit out the boats

for a short trip, we may readily, in good weather, make some of the islands at the west."

But though Albert thus sought to comfort the weak and helpless women with vague hopes, he saw how faint these hopes were ; for the breakers were dashing against the devoted vessel, and every moment the spars were snapped like glass, scattered over the waters and swept away on the foaming waves.

Captain Stockport, bold and energetic, ordered the boats to be cleared ready for a calmer moment, and all needful stores were sought out with care and order by his few faithful followers. But the greatest part of the sailors, rendered desperate by their situation, and seeing the vessel must be lost, despised all authority ; they broke open the spirit-room, broached the casks, drank to deaden their sense of danger, and then, reeling on deck, they insisted on lowering the launch immediately. In vain the captain and mate, assisted by the passengers, endeavoured to resist the desperate attempt of the madmen ; they seized the stores that had been brought on deck, lowered the launch, and the few sailors who had till then continued faithful, unable to resist the prospect of escape, joined them, and one after another they all crowded into it, and pushed off into the raging sea.

Marshall placed his hand before his eyes. "They are lost men, Captain Stockport," said he ; "and it's more than I can stand, to see them go to meet their account with the sins of drunkenness and mutiny on their heads. God be merciful to them !"

"God send they may reach the shore," answered the captain ; "but how that can be, in a sea like this,

with such a heavy-laden boat, and all those reefs running into the water, I cannot see." And he continued watching anxiously, while Marshall, assisted by the passengers, again prepared a lading for the long-boat, which was now cleared. The ill-fated launch was tossed about for some minutes, and then disappeared entirely amidst the mountainous waves, and the distressed watchers could have no doubt of its fate. The wind then suddenly went down, the sea gradually became calmer, though the waves still dashed against the vessel with a violence which could not long be resisted.

"Get out the boat, Mr. Marshall," said Captain Stockport in a firm voice, "you have hands enough to man her, though they are not the most experienced. If possible, you must see these poor women to shore, with such necessaries as you can stow.—I stay with my ship."

Marshall touched his hat, but did not speak, for he saw that at that moment the captain would hear no remonstrance. The boat was got out, and the females, having hastily collected the most useful and portable of their possessions, appeared on deck, followed by Mr. Pinchard, supported by John and Pierre, and appearing scarcely conscious of his movements, though he continued to utter deep groans.

The lading of the boat consisted of some mattresses, boxes of biscuit, canisters of preserved meat and other food, with casks of wine and of water, and some few other articles hastily snatched up in the hurry and confusion of the moment.

The sea was now calm enough for the attempt ;

the ladies were placed in the boat, where the unlucky Mr. Pinchard was laid on a mattress. Dr. Cameron and Marshall refused to abandon Captain Stockport ; therefore Albert and Charles, assisted by the two young Seytons and the servants, took the oars, proposing to return to the vessel as soon as they had safely landed their freight. The elder men of the party had been accustomed to rowing, and they managed to bring the boat skilfully towards the desolate shores. As they drew near, they found the coast guarded by high black rocks apparently inaccessible, and crowned by low ragged bushes. An opening between the cliffs of some extent formed a tolerably convenient harbour ; and to this spot they directed their course, and succeeded, without much difficulty, in landing their passengers and lading without accident. Then, selecting a deep niche in the rocks, a little beyond high-water mark, they conveyed to it the whole of the stores, and made ready for another trip. Mr. Pinchard, Hubert, and Edmund, with Abdalla armed with sword and pistols as guard, were left with the females, while the two friends and their servants rowed back to the vessel, which was already beginning to part, from the force of the waves that broke over her.

Dr. Cameron had in the mean time, with much difficulty, reasoned Captain Stockport into the conviction that it was his especial duty to follow and protect the passengers confided to his care, until, at least, they were placed in safety ; that he was bound to save all the money and papers of the vessel, and to deliver them, if God permitted him, into the hands of the owners, rather than to perish like a coward with

the stranded vessel. The active young men therefore assisted in moving the iron safe containing bills, papers, and specie, into the boat. Then they promptly collected arms, ammunition, tools, with sails, and such matters as might be useful in the projected voyage ; and with a heavy heart the captain abandoned his beloved ship, and with his friends turned towards the shore.

As they drew near the rocks, Albert pointed out to Marshall a low-mouthed cavity which he had noticed in his former trip ; it was a little above high-water mark, and was only accessible by sea ; this, he suggested, might make a safe powder-magazine until they were ready to sail from the coast. This plan was approved by the whole party, and Charles and Albert were deputed to explore it, and report on the convenience of it. By drawing the boat up close to the rocks where the water was deep and smooth, they were enabled to raise themselves to the narrow mouth, and crawl into the cave, which, though dark and gloomy, proved to be more spacious than they had expected, gradually ascending and penetrating far into the rocks. At once they determined to hoist up and leave in this place the barrels of gunpowder, bags of shot, and the principal part of the cargo which would not be immediately needed. This was easily effected, as it was now high water ; after which they rowed to the landing-place and joined their anxious friends, first carefully securing the precious boat with an anchor.

The meeting was one of thankfulness. " Captain Stockport," said Mrs. Churchill, " now that God has

mercifully spared all our lives, when the terrors of death were gathering round us, I trust you will agree with me that our first duty is to unite in thanksgiving for mercy received, and prayer for protection in this unknown land."

The good captain bowed his head to signify his consent, but was too much affected to perform the duties he usually fulfilled himself. Mrs. Churchill herself undertook the office, and all kneeling down, the incense of earnest Christian devotion ascended probably for the first time from those heathen shores.

After this solemn duty, they proceeded to form the niche in the rocks into a sort of tent, by raising spars and spreading over them sail-cloth for a roof. Beneath this canopy the ladies sheltered themselves from a scorching sun, while Norah and John arranged the various packages with some attention to neatness, and Abdalla collected broken spars, now plentifully scattered over the beach, lighted a fire, opened a water-cask, boiled a kettle of water, and proceeded to prepare coffee for breakfast.

Coffee without milk they had not been accustomed to, and every one recollected, when too late, the poor cow tied up in the wrecked vessel. The fowls, with their coops, had all been swept away by the waves, but Margaret especially, who had been accustomed to feed the cow, grieved over her fate, till Albert promised, if they succeeded in making another visit to the ship, to release the cow, and any other live stock they might find, and give them a chance of swimming to shore.

"After all," said Julia, "this is almost as good as

being cast away on a desolate island. Now I propose that we should try to discover the trees and flowers of our new country. We have yet seen nothing but sand and bare rocks."

Captain Stockport sighed as he said—"I fear, young lady, you will see little enough of trees or flowers on this miserable coast. God send us well away from it! What think you of rigging up the long-boat for a voyage, Mr. Marshall?"

"It can be done, captain," answered Marshall "but would it not be as well first to take an observation, and make out that we are safe from land pirates. And then, sir, them graceless scoundrels ought to be looked after; some of them may turn up yet, and one wouldn't have them kidnapped if one could save them, little as they deserve any care. You look a bit done up, captain, with your long watch, so if you'll please to take the coast duty, to look after the men, with one of these young gentlemen, I don't mind a clamber up the rocks to sight the country, and beat round, to be sure all's safe."

CHAPTER III.

The Sandy Desert and the Rocky Coast. Traces of the Arabs, and alarms. Proposals to Explore the Cave. A Trip to the new Retreat, and a look round. Reception of the Ambassadors to the Cave.

THIS arrangement was agreed to; Charles and the captain set out over the cliffs along the coast to the north, and Marshall, accompanied by Albert and Dr. Cameron, after walking about fifty yards from the beach inland, with some difficulty climbed the rugged cliffs, at the summit of which grew a fringe of low bushes. Beyond this was spread a wide plain, covered with a scanty verdure, dotted here and there with a few brown thorny shrubs. At the distance of a mile some low hills appeared; but all was solitude; not a single living creature to be seen—not even the note of a bird to be heard.

Marshall shook his head, as they walked on looking round: "Ay, ay, Mr. Beaumont," said he, "Captain Stockport knows the soundings of this place rightly, and the sooner we are on the sea and off the land the better. I don't like the look of it, and mark me, sir, if the pretty *Madras* does not go to pieces speedily, we shall have lots of those keen-eyed Arabs upon us to look out for plunder."

"Then we must try the boat, you think, Marshall?" said Dr. Cameron.

"Nothing else for it, doctor," answered he. "Just

look round and see if we be like to make anything out of land-voyaging, setting aside that Captain Stockport would never stand it. Then, again, in this matter of the long-boat, I'll not say that I'm any great hand with tools. Only to think, doctor, that our prime carpenter, Dick Wright, should have been such a fool as to leave good wages and run off at the last minute with them mutinous rogues. I would give a good deal if the captain should light on Dick, though it's odds but he would begin by giving him a rope's end for deserting."

"At all events," said Albert, "there seems no appearance of immediate danger; and if we set a watch on the heights, we may work without fear of a surprise. I can drive a nail myself, at a pinch; and the doctor ought surely to be able to manage the saw."

"I suppose the thing must be set about, and we must all lend a hand," said the doctor; "as our only alternative would be a flight across the desert, an expedition we should find impracticable with the impediment of our weak womankind. But, my dear fellows, it will take some time to fit out this boat, and you must remember we are in jeopardy every hour."

"I have been looking the hazard in the face, doctor," replied Albert, "and considering whether it would not be possible, as it is certainly desirable, to remove the ladies, with everything but our needful tools and materials, to that miserable cave in the rocks. We should then work with less care on our minds, and by keeping a watch on the summit of the cliff, we might, at any alarm, have time to launch the boat, and row out of reach of the barbarians."

"A cave"—said the doctor, reflecting for a few moments ; "are you sure, Beaumont, it is not a den—we could hardly expect a comfortably-lodged family of lions to vacate for our accommodation without a struggle, which might be unpleasant. We will discuss the matter when we return to the harbour, and if we decide on it, we must have the place fully explored."

Once more before they returned, Marshall, with a good glass, surveyed the country round, and they agreed that the wreck was certainly not yet discovered; and glad to have a little time to begin their preparation, they proceeded to join the anxious party on the beach, in better spirits than when they set out.

They had scarcely had time to speak of their observations, when they were joined by Captain Stockport and Charles, looking somewhat melancholy.

"Have you seen anything of the unfortunate seamen?" asked Miss Keenmark.

Captain Stockport shook his head, and Charles answered,—“Waste no pity on the mutinous dogs, Miss Keenmark; they deserved their fate, whether it was death by sea, or slavery on land, which seems to be the most likely termination of their adventure.”

“Is there any reason to believe, then, that they have actually reached land?” asked Mrs. Churchill.

“I think you will agree with me that they have, when you hear my account of our discoveries, Mrs. Churchill,” said Charles. “Captain Stockport—who really must have some dinner very soon, Abdalla, for he is completely done up—well, the captain and I, like good sailors, climbed the cliffs, and then walked along the bare and rugged edge for about three miles,

with nothing to see but sand on one hand and water on the other, till we reached a descent, which led to another small bay, something like this. I cannot say our walk was cheerful, for my companion groaned all the way, as he watched the dear old *Madras* battered by the rough waves. We descended to the newly-discovered bay, and found, scattered over the beach, spars, casks, and fragments of the household furniture of our friend, who grew sterner than ever at this melancholy spectacle. We walked forward to the wreck, and were then startled to see the marks of many footsteps in the sand; and amongst those of sandalled and unsandalled feet, were mingled the unmistakeable prints of English-made boots. 'God be thanked?' said the good captain, 'bad as the fellows were, I'm glad they escaped the death they dared. But the Arabs have been here; they have left the traces of the fires where they have burnt the wrecked timber in order to get possession of the nails. They will not be long before they return; so we must lose no time in leaving the coast.' And without more words, or even stopping to eat our luncheon, we made off homewards, like a pair of sheep-stealing curs."

Maude Seyton burst into tears, and said, "Oh! Aunt Churchill, let us go off again in the boat, whatever the danger may be. I can bear famine, fatigue, or privation of any kind, rather than to fall into the hands of savages. And dear grandmamma is watching for letters in England; and many dear friends expecting me at Cape Town, little aware of my terrible situation."

"We are in good hands, Maude," replied Mrs.

Churchill. "Our friends will all watch and weep; but God arranges events at His own good pleasure. He can save us; we must pray to Him, trust in Him, and then be patient, resigned, and, if necessary, be active. Captain Stockport, we are prepared to follow your counsel in everything. Are we to leave this place? Is it not too much exposed to observation?"

Captain Stockport's eyes and thoughts were busy with the boat; but Charles answered cheerfully, "Have no fears, Mrs. Churchill: we are brave fellows; a watch on the hills, and a body of guards round you, will secure your safety."

But, after eating a good dinner of stewed beef and rice, cooked by Norah and Abdalla, *al fresco*, over a fire of driftwood, the cave project was discussed; and, finally, Dr. Cameron, Captain Stockport, Marshall, and Albert, took the boat, and rowed along the rocks to explore the place. It was now low tide, but there was still eight or ten feet of water at the side of the lofty cliff, which enabled the boat to be brought close. Then Marshall mounted the mast, and succeeded in mooring the boat firmly to a large piece of rock within the mouth of the cave, and lowering a rope, assisted his companions to ascend, and they entered at once.

Their first impression was certainly not favourable; the place was gloomy and uninviting, and the fluttering of wings denoted it to be the resort of sea-birds; but it was lofty and cool. They had brought lights, and now proceeded to examine the extent of the cavern, which they found ascended gradually in shelves of rock, faintly lighted here and there by some small openings above. They had walked about three hun

dred yards without perceiving a trace of any dangerous inhabitant ; and though their examination was scarcely satisfactory, considered it prudent to return, when a distant ray of light encouraged them to proceed. They therefore continued to advance, till a large outlet conducted them into a basin-like hollow, of about twenty yards in diameter, open to the skies, but surrounded by high and inaccessible walls of rock, fringed at the summit with shrubs. This was certainly a secure retreat ; but the difficulty of approach was a formidable objection.

"It would be very desirable to ascertain where we are," said Albert. "We should not be more than a day in constructing a ladder from some of the yards and spars, by which we might ascend and take a view of the country."

"We have not a day to spare for such a work," said Captain Stockport.

"I would sooner climb the rock, sir," said Marshall, "if I had but a pole. I was a top-hand at the crags when I was a youth, and here are some good shelves at this side."

Before he had finished, Albert had hastened back to the entrance, and selected a pole from the spars they had stored there, and would have tried his own skill in making the ascent ; but the captain waved him on one side with authority, "On land, as at sea, Mr. Beaumont, I must still command. I rely on the skill and prudence of Mr. Marshall ; if he cannot scale this rock, no one else can do it."

With a rope wound round his waist to aid his descent, Marshall took the pole to steady himself, and

springing lightly from shelf to shelf of the almost perpendicular rock, he at length succeeded in seizing one of the thick bushes, and swung himself up into the midst of the entangled mass upon a ledge of about three yards broad. He forced his way through the bushes, and found himself at the edge of a precipitous descent, not quite so high as that in the interior, but certainly inaccessible. He looked round on the sandy plain for some striking object, that would serve to identify the spot from without ; but so monotonous was the wide desert, that he despaired of ever being able to distinguish the place, and therefore dropped his pole, which stuck in the sand below, and formed a guide-post.

On looking towards the sea, he was able to calculate, by the position of the wrecked vessel, that the cave diverged considerably towards the south. It appeared to him, on the whole, that the hollow must be perfectly safe from any intrusion, and a desirable asylum for the ladies, if they could be prevailed on to seclude themselves in such a dismal prison ; and, satisfied with his observations, he secured one end of the rope firmly round a tough bush, and easily descended to make his report, which was heard with satisfaction.

"A somewhat cheerless prospect, certainly, for our fair companions," said the doctor, looking round ; "the accommodation is bare, and decidedly of a jail-like character."

"Nevertheless, here we must land them," said Captain Stockport, "till our boat is fit for sea ; and with them must come that very useless person Mr. Pinchard. They will be tolerably well provisioned,

and must fancy themselves in a cabin, and make the best of it."

"If it would be safe to make another visit to the vessel," said Albert, "we might bring away a portable tent, with cooking-apparatus, and other comforts thereunto belonging, which Mr. Staunton and I brought out for our rambles; and if the tent were pitched in this hollow, it would form a much pleasanter dwelling than the cave."

"You can do as you like, Mr. Beaumont," groaned the captain; "but if I was once more to set my foot on the deck of the old *Madras*, I do not think you could get me to leave her again. I have made fifteen voyages in her; I have spent happily the greatest part of my life in her walls, and what is left of me would be hardly worth preserving, but for the duty of the thing."

They retraced their way more leisurely through the cave, examining each side carefully as they proceeded, and came to the conclusion that it was perfectly free from noxious animals, the nests of some sea-swallows being the only signs of habitation they could discover. On entering the boat, the rope by which it was moored, was left hanging, to assist their approach to the entrance on future occasions, though, if possible, they proposed to time their visits at high water, when the access was less difficult.

On reaching the harbour, they announced their arrangements to the party, and Mrs. Churchill cheerfully consented to the measure; her daughters were in ecstasies at the idea of a new adventure, Maude shrieked at the idea of a cave, and Angeline jabbered

her dissent, while Mr. Pinchard was grateful for any shelter that promised security from the much-dreaded marauders of the deserts. No time was to be lost ; Albert and Charles, with John and the unwearied Marshall, rowed out to the wreck, while the rest prepared the packages for immediate removal.

CHAPTER IV.

The last Voyage to the *Madras*, and its results. The Embarkation. The Cavern Home. The unskilled Carpenters. Search for a Well. The arrangements for the Voyage. Watering the Vessel. An Ostrich in the Field. An unlucky Shot.

THE boat was soon pushed out to the vessel, now rapidly breaking up, and it was not without risk the party boarded her. They found the state-room which had been appropriated to the two friends uninjured, and brought out the tent and its appurtenances ; afterwards they collected workboxes, drawing and writing-boxes, and some books from the ladies' rooms, to cheer their solitude. They rolled into the boat another large cask of water, as none had yet been found on the coast ; Albert looked out for a chair, proposing to rig a whip from the mouth of the cave for the ladies ; Marshall threw in more bags of shot and ball ; and having ascertained, for Margaret's satisfaction, that the cow had broken her halter, and set out to seek her fortune by water, the party no longer delayed their return.

They landed their freight at the cave, and even pitched their pretty tent in the hollow, for the reception of its guests ; then rigging the whip for service, they made for the harbour. They found all ready, and the party at once embarked, though not without screams from Maude, hysterics from Angeline, and a world of groans from Mr. Pinchard, who contrived,

however, to murmur to Pierre, who was assisting him, "N'oubliez pas *l'eau-de-vie*, je vous prie, mon bon Pierre."

Pierre had not forgotten the case of *eau-de-vie*, and Mr. Pinchard sunk down in the boat, reconciled to his severe trials.

By this time the tide was partly risen, and the ascent to the cave, assisted by Albert's useful arrangement, was not so difficult as they expected, but was nevertheless alarming even to strong nerves ; nor was it without a shuddering feeling that Mrs. Churchill and her two daughters followed Mr. Marshall and John, who led the way with torches, through the gloomy chasm. After them came Maude, supported by Albert and Charles, with her two brothers attending her ; Angeline, leaning on the arm of Pierre, with her smelling-bottle held to her nose, and the trembling Mr. Pinchard at the other side, went next ; Norah and Abdalla followed, laden with baskets, kettles, and various packages ; and Captain Stockport, with his friend Dr. Cameron, closed the long procession.

They wound silently through the dark recesses, till, at length, they emerged into the cheerful light of day ; and though, under other circumstances, the confined court would have certainly been deemed a prison, yet, leaving the gloom of the cave, and looking on the elegant tent, with its light and fanciful drapery, the young ladies were charmed.

"Oh, Hubert !" cried Julia, "is not this better than being cast on a desolate island ? It is truly a flight to fairy-land."

"Then, I wish some of the fairies had been here to welcome us," said Maude, "for it seems perfectly *triste*."

"My dear Maude," replied Julia, "it only wants birds and flowers to make it a miniature 'Happy Valley.'"

"I like men and women better than birds and flowers, Julia," said Maude; "pleasant men and women, I mean,—heroes in scarlet, and ladies in diamonds; and my 'Happy Valley' is a ball-room."

Julia did not reply, for she had happily had no experience of the charms of a ball-room.

When the mattresses were arranged in the tent, a large chest placed in the court for a table, and several cushions, brought from the ship, arranged round it, Abdalla and Norah selected a convenient nook within the cave for a kitchen, and prepared tea, a refreshment which revived even the languid Maude and the trembling Mr. Pinchard.

"I'm sure I thank you, gentlemen," said the latter, "for providing this snug hiding-place for us. I have not felt so comfortable since we left England; and I can wait very well here till something turns up."

"But we must not wait, sir," said Mrs. Churchill, "till our bread and water are exhausted, for we are in a bad country for obtaining supplies."

"It is no longer a surprise to me," observed Miss Keenmark, "that the early African voyagers were unable to penetrate this barren desert; but it is surprising that, one after another, adventurers continued to pursue the *ignis fatuus*, and to perish. The ardent

desire for the knowledge of hidden things which has lured some to violate the laws of religion and seek the aid of fallen spirits, has doubtless prompted others to cast away health, riches, and life itself, in the vague hope of discovering new worlds. May I ask of you, Mr. Beaumont, as a man of classical learning, if we do not derive from Herodotus the earliest account of Africa ? ”

“ Certainly, madam,” replied Albert ; “ he was the first who ventured to describe Africa ; though his geographical details are somewhat inaccurate, and he fixes the southern limit of the continent at the north of the equator.”

“ Amongst my slender collection of books,” said the lady, “ I have unfortunately neglected to include this interesting historian,—an omission I regret, as I particularly wished to read the voyage of the adventurous Phœnicians, six centuries before our Christian era.”

“ I possess a copy of Herodotus, madam,” said Albert, “ which I would gladly offer you, but it is in the original language, and I can scarcely expect a lady to read Greek.”

“ I willingly accept your offer, Mr. Beaumont,” returned she, eagerly. “ I do read Greek tolerably well. Being the only child of a clergyman who took pupils, it was my beloved parent’s pleasure that I should share their lessons, that I might thus be enabled to instruct others.”

to bring Herodotus for the learned
med her that the book contained
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of ancient geography in his port-

manteau which he also offered to her, as he was now too busily employed to have time to read.

All was so secure that no watch was necessary, and the men selected dormitories in the spacious cave, while the ladies reposed under the tent,—a sufficient shelter in that hot climate.

At an early hour next morning Charles roused Hubert : “Come,” cried he, “my fine fellow, no idleness. We little thought, when we embarked in the *Madras*, how soon we should be transformed into mechanics ; but Marshall is inexorable : he calls on us all to take up our axes and hammers and embark with him to begin our day’s work. Edmund, the soft-hearted fellow, is to be left with the ladies. We are to breakfast on the beach, I conclude, for here is a basket of biscuit and cold beef which Abdalla the crafty contrived to cook last night in the bowels of the cavern. And here is the luxury of a flask of the venerable old water brought from the ship.”

Hubert made a wry face at the proposed breakfast, as he followed Charles to the boat, where all the male force of the party, with the exception of Edmund and Mr. Pinchard, and Abdalla left to officiate as cook, were seated in the boat, and they were soon at the beach to begin work. They found no traces of visitors, which was satisfactory ; but the sand was strewn with the wreck of the unfortunate *Madras*, and Captain Stockport sighed deeply over broken yards and splintered timber, as he stood uneasily watching the inexperienced workmen’s clumsy attempts to form the boat into a substitute for his lost vessel.

They proposed to fit a rudder and tiller, also stan-

chions to support a canopy or tent of sail-cloth as a cabin for the ladies. They had brought eight oars from the vessel, and masts, which were to be raised in a workmanlike manner, and they had also a small anchor. The work did not progress that day so rapidly as they had hoped, and many a wish was uttered for honest Dick the carpenter, by some unskilful workman who had hammered his own fingers instead of the nail he intended to drive.

At the end of the third day, however, the work seemed drawing to a conclusion, and Charles and Hubert, weary of toil, both desired a respite. Hubert spoke his wishes first.

"It seems to me, captain, that you have more hands than are actually needed, and my sickening breakfast induces me to make a proposal to you. I long to taste the pure element again, and from some little knowledge I have acquired in the course of my studies, I flatter myself I shall discover a spring, and we may thus procure fresh water for the new vessel. If any gentleman will volunteer to accompany me, I shall be glad this moment to start on an expedition for this desirable purpose."

"I shall be proud to serve under you," said Charles, bowing gravely to the very young soldier; "therefore, most profound *Dottore*, if you will take your divining-rod, I will follow you, and we will sally forth to discover a new fountain in the desert; over which we will erect a tablet declaring that it has been formally taken possession of by the English, and named 'Seyton's Well.'"

"You had better take your rifles, young gentlemen,"

said Captain Stockport, "instead of any conjuring tools ; for you may fall into some risk, and perhaps endanger us all."

"Now I think on it," said Charles, "that would be hardly fair towards you ; therefore, if we should really encounter those vagabond Arabs, I will fire a shot to warn you, when you can launch the boat and make off for the cave. And, after all, if we should be lucky enough to escape from them, we will seek Marshall's pole along the rocks, give a whistle, and you must send down a rope to take us in at the back entrance."

"Quite right, my good fellow," said the doctor. "If you do fall into difficulties in your Quixotic expedition, you must alone be the sufferers. For us to remain here, in such a case, would not only be peril to our own lives, but utter perdition to the unfortunate party inclosed in the rock."

"I know that Charles is laughing at me," said Hubert ; "but I wish to test my theoretical knowledge ; and I think, Mr. Beaumont, you will allow that I am no dunce."

Albert smiled at the consequential tone of the little fellow, but thought, if they proceeded with caution, there was no danger in their expedition, which he advised them to make in a direction towards the south, keeping near the cliffs, that they might discover the spot where Marshall had thrown down the pole, as the means of access from thence to the cave might be necessary for them.

The two young men set out, each carrying a rifle, a spade, and a leather bucket for the water they expected to meet with. After ascending to the plain,

they moved cautiously on towards the south, Hubert casting his eyes keenly round for the signs of water, but the brown, withered, scanty grass offered no encouragement to his hopes. Only once were they startled by the sight of a living creature,—a small animal bounded in a curious manner across their path, and Charles involuntarily raised his rifle; but Hubert, with more discretion, arrested his arm, reminding him that the report would certainly alarm their friends, and might summon their enemies.

Charles, who was better versed in natural history than his friend, pronounced the animal to be a jerboa. "We may call him a jumping mouse, Hubert," continued he; "but if I had secured him for Miss Keenmark, she would have named him one of the *dipodidæ*. They are evidently animals of eccentric habits and taste, hopping, like birds, on two legs, and preferring the arid desert to the grassy plain. How this poor creature managed to support life in this region of famine, I cannot tell; but probably he would grub for bulbous roots in the sand. At all events, he is so small and lean, and so very like a rat, that it is quite as well that I did not waste shot on him."

They continued to walk about a mile, keeping near the rocky barrier which guarded the coast and even rose to a great height from the plain, partially sheltering them from the burning rays of the sun. At length they rested in an angle caused by a mighty mass of rocks jutting out beyond the rest. Here they sat down beneath a thorny bush, overcome with heat and thirst; and looking round, perceived a pole

standing about twenty yards before them, which Charles declared must be Marshall's signal-staff.

Revived by this discovery, they went forward to the staff, which they found standing firmly fixed in the sand before a perpendicular wall of rock, at least twenty feet high, beyond which, they doubted not, was the snug retreat of their friends. They despaired, however, of being able to hold any communication with them, for no sound could penetrate through that solid rock, which continued to run out from this spot at least fifty yards further into the plain.

"Let us follow this wall onward," said Charles, "to be certain there is no other mode of access to our stronghold. A surprise in the rear would be very awkward."

They walked forward for some yards, when Hubert suddenly cried out, "Stop, Charles, I am on the scent at last! here we must find water,"—pointing to a patch of ground somewhat greener than the rest, close to the foot of the rock; and Charles, perceiving there was really some promise of success, consented to share the labour of digging in the soft sand. They worked alternately till they had scooped a hollow three feet deep, and then were rewarded by seeing a few drops ooze through the sides of the well. A few more spadefuls of sand cleared out made the water attainable; a little more work, and a bucket was filled, and they enjoyed the luxury of copious draughts of pure water.

"If we could but open a communication with our friends in the cave," said Charles, "we might send them a few buckets over. We must think on some

plan, for our new vessel must certainly be watered from 'Seyton's well.' What have you got in your pocket, Hubert."

A knife was too hard, it might break somebody's head; a pocket-book was too valuable, it might be lost in some cavity. At last Charles tore a leaf from his pocket-book, and wrote on it with a pencil, "Lower a rope, and we will send you up a bucket of fresh water." Then taking up a handful of sand, he tied it up like a ball in the corner of a silk handkerchief, inclosing his note in it; and retiring to a proper distance, he whirled the ball round like a set of bolas, and sent it dexterously over the rock, and, as he hoped, into the court below.

They waited anxiously five or six minutes, filling the buckets in the mean time to be ready: then a slight rustling sound was heard above them, and the dark countenance of Abdalla was seen looking cautiously down.

"Oh, massa!" he cried, "how me be glad; me tink mebbe it be de dog Moor."

"All right, Abdalla!" was the answer. "Down with the rope,—good. You haven't forgotten the hook.—Now, steady, my good fellow!"

The bucket was raised and lowered into the court several times, to the great joy of the party below,—Norah being busily employed in filling bowls, kettles, and bottles, with the precious store. At length the spring began to fail, and the water-bearers to be weary; and it was therefore arranged that they should renew their labours, with a stronger force, at daybreak next morning.

"And now, my good fellow," said Charles, "tired as we are, we must cover up our well ; for the Arabs like a fresh spring as much as we do ; and it would not be very agreeable to have them so near our castle ; for though they are not to be feared on the sea, they can climb rocks better than we."

Before they covered up the well, which they did as artfully as they were able, they filled the buckets once more, to carry to their companions on the beach as an undoubted proof of their discovery. They were received with great joy, and their healths were drunk with enthusiasm in the delicious water. The boat was in such a state of forwardness, that Albert, with the aid of Marshall and John, undertook to complete it the next day. The remainder of the force were to be employed in refilling the water-casks.

Their return to the cave was hailed with great pleasure, after their useful labours. They found that Norah had had a washing-day, as she called it, having let down the linen by a line into the sea, to be cleansed by the waves, and then suspended it in the caves to dry.

"Sorra a bit the whiter it is you'll find them, Masther Hubert, dear," said she ; "but see now ! sure niver was there a counthry in the wide world so scarce of wather ! and wasn't it for yourself, and Misther Charles Staunton, good luck to yees ! it's the say wather itself we would have to make the tay-wather and the coffee-wather of."

"It is indeed a wretched country !" yawned Maude. "Pray, Captain Stockport, when may we expect to leave this dismal dungeon ?"

"Oh, Mande!" cried Julia, "I think our retreat is delightful; and if we had but a ladder made that we might ascend to the ramparts to walk in the cool of the evening, our castle would be completely romantic. Only think, if we were to discover a knight riding up on his charger to crave our hospitality!"

"An Arab, mounted on a camel, to carry you off into slavery," said Mrs. Churchill, "would be a much more likely visitor. I protest against a ladder. We will have no imprudent exposures on the ramparts."

"Be satisfied, ladies," said Captain Stockport; "I hope in a day or two we may abandon our castle altogether. Before to-morrow night our boat will be rigged; then we have but to take in water and our lading, and to wait for a fair wind."

"But I do not think it can be safe for so many to venture in such a small boat," said Mr. Pinchard. "Only think, Captain Stockport, if another storm should come on, we might be swamped,—and we have no more boats to land us. It seems madness to remove from this very secure spot, especially as we now have water within reach."

"I compel no one to embark," answered the captain, "but I give all the option."

"Let us have a show of hands," said Charles. "All who wish to take passage with Captain Stockport, will please to hold up the right hand."

Every one but Mr. Pinchard laughingly complied; then Charles continued—"Now for the settlers on the coast. Hands up, those who wish to stay."

"You mean me, Mr. Staunton," said Mr. Pinchard pettishly; "but you cannot think I could live in this

place alone. I am willing to join any party that would remain till we could be taken up by a regular ship, with comfortable berths for all. We might easily set up a signal on the cliffs."

"Which would soon draw the Arabs round you," said Marshall, "and if they had a suspicion we were here, they could readily board us. No, sir, your best course is to come along with us, and I'll engage to make room for you in the boat."

A part of the rescued cargo was a large barrel of flour, from which Abdalla and Norah undertook the next day to make a sufficient supply of biscuits for the voyage, which they baked on an iron plate over a fire in the cave, and Mr. Pinchard, amused by watching their employment, almost forgot his miseries.

In the mean time, Albert, Marshall, and John, the carpenters, rowed to the beach to finish their work, accompanied by Hubert and Charles, managers of the water-works, and Edmund, who had earnestly begged to be of the party, that he might have a peep at this strange country before they left it. Arrived at the beach, the workmen set about their finishing touches, while the three young friends went forward to the well, Captain Stockport himself heading a little force on the ramparts to draw up the water, while Pierre and Dr. Cameron assisted in the court below to fill the casks.

After uncovering the well, they dug a little deeper, and soon had a plentiful flow of water, so that the work progressed rapidly till one large cask was filled, the workmen flagged, and the well was low, when they agreed to defer the completion of their labour till the





Charles shoots the Ostrich.

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following morning, "positively their last appearance at Seyton's well," Charles said. They began to cover up the well, but had not finished their labour when Edmund cried out, "Charles, Hubert, do look round, —it must be an ostrich!"

They did look round, and beheld, on a low sandhill about thirty yards from them, an immense ostrich, stalking forwards regardless of their presence.

"He is coming to drink at our well!" cried Hubert.

"Then we will defend our own," answered Charles, firing his rifle at the bird, which ran off swiftly for some yards with its wings extended, and then fell.

"What a prize!" cried Charles, running up to dispatch it.

"Oh, Charles," said Hubert, "Albert will take your shot for a signal, and they will row off in the boat."

"No matter," answered he; "they will send us a rope down, and we will mount the ramparts, as Julia calls our rocky walls."

At that moment they heard the voice of Abdalla, whom the report of the gun had brought to his station on the wall.

"Down! down! under de bush! Me see de Moor come!"

The youths threw themselves down behind a clump of low bushes, through which Charles cautiously looked, and saw a man, mounted on a camel, on the ridge of the low sandhills about a hundred yards from their hiding-place. He was looking eagerly round, and it was plain the report of the rifle had been the cause of his appearance, and now, too late, Charles deeply lamented his imprudence.

"If we were sure he had not a troop at his heels," said he to his two companions, "we would face him valiantly ; but we are in a downright fix if I have brought the whole horde upon us."

"Could we not get to the rock, and they could draw us up by a rope?" asked Edmund.

"And so let the man into the secret of our retreat, and sacrifice the whole party," answered Charles. "That will never do, boy. These Arabs can climb rocks, and would soon take possession of our castle. But see! he has turned his camel round. If he would but keep out of sight for ten minutes, I might get you boys up the rock."

But he did not go out of sight. The man was probably a scout, and only turned back to the brow of the hill to make a signal, for immediately after, fifteen or twenty mounted Arabs appeared, one after another, over the brow of the hill, and rode forward to the spot where the struggling ostrich lay, and from whence the report had proceeded.

CHAPTER V.

Making the best of it. The Captors and the Captured. The Spoliation. An Arab Banquet. A Musical Evening. The Discovery of Dick the Carpenter. A Visit to the Bay. The Tool-Chest. Plans for Escape.

"It's all up now, Hubert," said Charles ; " we may as well give up this paltry attempt at concealment, for it cannot avail us long. But keep up your hearts, my good lads. We have friends at hand who will not desert us. We must surrender with a good grace, for the present ; but remember,—we give no *parole*. Now then, onward like men."

They sprang up, and with smiling countenances, though Edmund certainly looked rather pale, they walked slowly forward to meet the Arabs, with their guns loosely resting on their arms. It was easy to distinguish the chief or *scheik*, by his superior accoutrements, and by his majestic deportment ; and approaching him they saluted him with the ceremonious bowing of the body which is understood by all nations to denote respect ; and to give the cue to his young friends, Charles, in indifferent Arabic, said, " We are shipwrecked strangers, who claim your hospitality and aid."

With a suspicious glance round, the Arab answered, " Where are the rest of the Nazarine strangers ? Were none but you and the two boys saved ?"

" The sailors left the vessel in a boat, which I fear was lost," answered Charles.

The scheik deigned no reply, but rode forward to the fallen ostrich, and ordered some of his followers to kill and carry off the huge creature.

"A dirty action," observed Charles to Hubert, "so coolly to bag our game. Now adieu to Seyton's well."

In truth the well had been but half covered, and soon attracted attention, when all the Arabs gathered round it with loud cries of pleasure, seizing the spades of their captives and uncovering the precious water. The friends longed to look up at the ramparts to see if their misfortune was observed, but dared not even turn their eyes in that direction, lest they should rouse the suspicions of the watchful and keen-eyed Arabs. But Charles continued to converse with the boys in English in a loud voice, hoping some one might be acting sentinel, and at length, pointing to the camels as if describing them to his young friends, he said, slowly and distinctly, "Have no fears for our safety ; do not venture beyond the cave ; keep a night-watch, and depend on it we will be with you before long."

After he had thus eased his mind, he felt more at liberty to remark what the captors were about. The water had been tasted and approved, and a water-bottle of skin, which hung from the saddle of one of the camels, had been filled by means of a gourd-bowl. Much discussion succeeded, and, from what Charles and Hubert could understand, it was proposed to remove the tents to this spring, where they would be near the beach to collect the wreck. The Arabs spoke in a very loud tone, and the young men trusted their voices

might be heard by some of the garrison of the cave, and they might thus be put on their guard.

Charles felt relieved from a part of his fears, when the scheik, turning the head of his camel from the rocks, ordered his men to carry off the spades and buckets, and to take Edmund upon a camel ; then commanding the two friends to follow him, he rode slowly back towards the eastern hills. Hubert was highly offended at this peremptory command, and commenced, in a very haughty tone, to remonstrate with the scheik. His Arabic was probably not very intelligible, for the great man did not deign to answer him, but regarding him with a look of contempt, he spoke to a savage-looking man that rode by his side, who, stooping down, seized the boy, and lifting him up easily with one hand, placed him on the camel behind him. Hubert resented this indignity greatly, and in a loud voice proclaimed that he was one of the soldiers of the Queen of England, and the scheik might rely on it, if a subject of her majesty were injured, she would visit the whole horde with her displeasure.

This pompous oration seemed to afford great amusement to the Arabs, who, looking at Hubert's youthful figure, certainly formed no exalted notion of the military heroes of England, much to the mortification of Charles, who was vexed that the boasting of the foolish boy should produce such contempt of the great warriors of his native land.

The scheik led the way for about a mile, over several low hills ; at length, on reaching the summit of one somewhat higher than the rest, they looked down on a plain over which were scattered dark tents,

women and children, camels and goats. A crowd of the women and children rushed forward to meet them, shrieking, chattering, and pointing to the captives. The scheik rode up to the largest tent, and dismounted, two women holding the camel, and then removing the saddle. Charles followed him closely, and said, "Scheik, as strangers, and in need, we claim the hospitality of your tent."

"You are Nazarines," said the Arab, bitterly ; "therefore you are the foes of the followers of the Great Prophet ; you are our slaves, not our guests. We throw dust on the Queen of England and her puny warriors."

It was very vexatious to be enslaved so quietly, without even the credit of a struggle ; and Charles suspected that Hubert's ill-timed defiance had irritated the Arabs ; therefore, when the youths were flung from the camels by their captors, he took an opportunity to warn them to be discreet, and even submissive, till they knew what their fate was to be. He also obtained from Hubert a certain tricoloured silk handkerchief, which he had seen him display ; and with this splendid offering he approached a portly dame, whom he judged to be the wife of the scheik, from her familiarity with the great man ; and bowing very low, he placed the silken mantle over her broad shoulders, with a few Arabic words expressing his admiration of her charms.

The dark lady was not insensible to flattery ; she laughed good-naturedly at the imperfect pronunciation of the stranger ; and lifted up her hands in wonder and admiration as she pointed to the glittering

gold chain which hung round his neck, saying, "And you also are a great scheik in your tribe, Nazarine."

Charles sighed over the inevitable sacrifice of a favourite piece of foppery ; but determined not to have it torn from him ; therefore, concealing his watch beneath his vest, he presented the very handsome chain to the scheik with the best grace he could assume. There was a sparkle in the eye of the Arab as he received it ; but he preserved his proud immobility of countenance, took the chain, and flung it round his neck ; then pointing to a small tent near his own, he commanded the three captives to enter it, which they gladly did to escape further plunder, for the eager glances of cupidity cast on their garments by the ill-clad tribe were alarming. The scheik himself wore a handsome *haik* or cloak of blue cloth, confined round his waist with a red silk sash, in which were placed knives and pistols ; but the soiled, tattered haiks of the rest of the tribe evinced great poverty.

The scheik followed his prisoners into the tent ; and Charles, concluding his object was plunder, said, "Noble scheik, we have money with us : we can procure much more at Mogadore ; we are willing to pay our ransom ; therefore allow us to keep our clothes, and do not compel us to servile offices, which we are unused to fulfil."

"Your money is now mine by right," said the marble-faced Arab. "Of your garments I will spare you what is necessary ; but you wear many haiks and *bourouns*, when one alone is needful."

When Charles had made the scheik understand that they wore no more haiks or *bourouns* than were

absolutely necessary for an Englishman, the man continued,—“Where is the gold? Where is the treasure of your ship, which lies beyond reach on the sea?”

“Doubtless much still remains within her,” answered Charles, “or may be cast on the beach where we were thrown.”

A piercing glance of doubt and suspicion was the only answer for some time; then their persecutor said, “When the sun rises again, you will lead us to that beach where you were landed from the boat. We will search for the iron and gold of the ship. Now, give me the money of which you spoke.”

The captives reluctantly produced their well-filled purses, and the remorseless scheik, with his own royal hands, searched the pockets of their shooting-jackets, extracting cartridges, cigars, knives, and the whole amount of little necessities which constitute the contents of a young gentleman's pocket. He regarded his acquisitions with ill-repressed curiosity and pleasure; and requesting the youths to remain in the tent, and he would send them food, he departed with his spoil concealed beneath his haik.

They certainly did not feel much inclined to leave their shelter, for the horde were gathered round, watching for their appearance, evidently bent on plunder; and every principle of comfort and decorum urged them to preserve, if possible, their sole remaining possessions—the clothes they wore.

Some hours passed, and the captives began to feel that food was certainly necessary for the support of life; and at length they became so hungry, that they had resolved even to penetrate into the sanctuary of

the scheik himself to ask for relief, when the cloth that covered the entrance of the tent was raised, and the portly wife of the scheik entered, followed by two girls, one carrying a wooden bowl filled with a certain mess called *kouscousoo*, the other a bowl of camel's milk. They placed these vessels on the ground, the great lady pronounced a Mohammedan grace over the food, and then, with great urbanity, commanded the guests to eat.

Hubert looked alternately at the two bowls and at his friend in mute despair.

"It certainly is not a mess-room banquet, nor a civic feast," said Charles, laughing at his dismal face; "but we might have fallen among rogues who would have eaten us instead of feeding us. We are hungry, boys, and we must be thankful for what we get."

"But there are no spoons, Charles," said Edmund.

"You are a green youth, Ned," answered Charles, "to expect a table-service in an Arab tent. There boys, keep each to your own side of the bowl, and, after the repast, cleanse your fingers in the sand under your feet."

As there was no alternative, and all were ravenously hungry, they commenced the attempt to fling the *kouscousoo* into their mouths; but the execution was such a poor success, that the lady and her dark nymphs were highly amused at the awkwardness of their strange guests; and Mrs. Scheik dispatched a messenger to summon several other matrons of distinction to see the lions feed. Charles bore this indignity with good humour, and Edmund laughed and made an attempt to chatter with the ladies, to their great entertainment; but Hubert could not conceal the

wounds inflicted on his pride, and continued to threaten his mocking tormentors with the vengeance of the English nation,—a threat which only increased their mirth.

At length the women retired with the fragments of the feast, and tempted by the cool evening air, the captives ventured outside the tent, and went up to the scheik, who, leaning against his tent, was directing the horde to collect and milk the camels. He pointed out to the youths the employment of the Arabs and said, "To-morrow you must also work ; you are my slaves."

"Not so," answered Charles ; "we have not been taught to labour ; we are the sons of scheiks, and have had servants to work for us. Take us to Mogadore ; there you will receive an ample ransom for us, if we have been well treated."

Though the language of Charles was not pure Arabic, it was sufficiently intelligible to the crafty and covetous scheik. He examined the features of his prisoners with suspicion ; then said, "In three days a caravan will pass here with slaves ; they journey to Mogadore, and bring from Timbuctoo likewise corn and dates. I will sell you to these merchants for a good price, and they will convey you in safety."

The boys turned pale at the proposal ; but Charles was not without a hope of escape, as they had yet three days for action. He asked for some mats to rest on, but the scheik made no reply, and waved his hands for them to leave him. They returned to the entrance of their own tent, and stood a few moments to enjoy the evening breeze from the sea. The women were

grouped together, chattering and nursing the infants, while the elder children were rolling about on the sand with great enjoyment. As they stood watching the sport, a fine, noble-looking boy of eight years old came up to them, and after a careful inspection of their strange dress, and a satisfactory survey of his own scanty robe, he seemed attracted by the smiling countenance of Edmund, and held out a silver box to show him, with great pride. Poor Edmund recognised it, with great mortification, as part of the spoil torn from him by the Arab. It was a valuable musical-box, but, much as he regretted the loss, his goodnature induced him to give pleasure to the child. He therefore took the box, wound it up with the key, which, suspended by a ribbon to his neck, had escaped the plunderer's notice, and set the instrument to a lively polka.

The astonishment and terror of the child, when he heard his prize produce these pleasing sounds, were extreme. He uttered a piercing cry ; and the women and children soon surrounded the pale strangers, listening with awe and pleasure to the voice of the spell-stricken box, which Edmund had the satisfaction of thinking they never more would dare to touch ; and taking courage at the success of his exploit, he seized the hands of the child, who was, he found, the son of the moon-faced wife of the scheik, and whirled him round in a merry dance to the sound of the music.

The child, at first alarmed, soon entered into the spirit of the frolic, and marked the time with the accuracy of a musical ear. One after another, the children caught the infection and attempted to imitate the movements of the merry young captive, to the

infinite amusement of the women, and such of the men as condescended to view the scene. When the little instrument stopped, Edmund again wound it up, changing the air, which still further increased the wonder of the auditors. Finally, he concluded with "God save the Queen," and prevailing on Charles and Hubert to join him, they sang the national anthem with prodigious effect, the Arabs listening with mute admiration ; after which appropriate termination of the entertainment, they withdrew to their tent, Edmund taking care to carry away the box, which no one desired to touch after the exhibition of its magical powers.

Scarcely had they entered, when the curtain was raised and a man appeared, clad in a tattered *haik*, with hair and beard matted, and altogether so squalid in appearance that they did not recognise him till he said,—

"The Lord be thanked ! Little did I ever think to hear 'God save the Queen' sung here among a set of black savages, that I'll be bound never heard the tune afore, God help 'em !"

"Why, Dick, is it really you ?" cried Charles, astonished to see that it was the carpenter, whom they had lamented as drowned in the lost boat.

"Ay, master, it's I, sure enough," answered he ; "and it's more than I deserve to meet any on' you again. But, indeed, Mr. Staunton, it was all the rum ; I never could bide much on 't. And now, if Captain Stockport be living, and pray God send he is, how can I face him after having mutinied ?"

They were here interrupted by several women, headed by the wife of the scheik, who, in gratitude

for the entertainment they had received, brought to the captives bowls of milk and kouscoussoo, with which was mingled pieces of kid—a refreshment heartily enjoyed. Then Charles pointed out Dick to the scheik's wife as one of their servants, and begged he might remain with them. The favour was graciously allowed, and the women departed.

Dick then told them that the boat had actually been swamped, but that he, with ten more of the men, had succeeded in swimming ashore. Then perfectly sobered by their danger, and worn out with exertion, they climbed the cliffs only to see round them misery and desolation. For twenty-four hours they had wandered about, half dead with hunger and thirst, when they came upon the Arab encampment; and were glad to accept slavery as the only means of escaping death.

Before they had been two days with the horde, Dick's wonderful skill was found out. Even with the rude tools of his enslavers, he had made boxes and tables to their great satisfaction; and when the rest of the men were sold to a caravan of merchants on the way to Mogadore, Dick was retained as chief carpenter to the scheik. "And the worst on it is, Master Staunton," continued he, "that I cannot make 'em understand a word I say, if I were to shout as loud as a town-crier. There they go on, gabbling their outlandish lingo, and never minding me; and if you hadn't come, like enough I should have forgotten my own tongue, and never a word of theirs could I learn, if I were to bide here till doomsday."

It was melancholy enough for the young men to reflect that they were actually slaves, and that their

dear friends in the cave were weeping for them ; but they had all been brought up in the love of God, and faith in His providence ; and kneeling down together, they fervently offered thanksgivings and prayers to their Almighty Protector ; and then, on their mats, took such repose as the mosquitoes permitted them to enjoy.

They were glad to leave the hut as soon as morning dawned, and found the chief already busy giving orders to his people. He turned to Charles and commanded him to lead the way to the spot where they had been wrecked, pointing to the camels in case his captives wished to mount ; but all declined the honour, and preferred walking before the Arabs over the hot sandy soil, as they had thus opportunity to converse and to observe. Dick, whom Charles knew to be true and honest when sober, had already been made acquainted with the position of the party in the cave ; and shared with the young men the dread lest the boat should be found at the harbour.

At length Charles decided to lead the Arabs round by the well at the rear of the cave ; hoping thus to attract the attention of the sentinel on watch, and to give a timely warning. As they drew near, he began to sing lively songs, which amused the Arabs ; and when near enough to the rocky wall, he ventured to *improvise* an account of their situation, and of their plans, which he sang to a well-known air, without exciting any suspicion in the Arabs, though he was much alarmed lest the ill-concealed laughter of Edmund, and the amazed looks of Dick, should betray his deception.

Leaving the well, Charles now reluctantly led the

way to the beach, scarcely daring to look down when he reached the edge of the cliff, and it was with a fervent thanksgiving to God that he found the harbour still and lonely. The whole party were now busily engaged rolling casks and chests, and collecting planks and spars in a pile to burn, in order to extract the nails and hoops, Dick looking on with disgust at their ignorance. A chest of clothes was forced open and the contents divided; even Dick had his rags replaced by a huge watch-coat, which he chose for its capacious pockets.

Another chest was dragged up, when Dick, seeing the Arabs about to set fire to the pile, cried out,—“Stop them, Mr. Staunton; see here, it has pleased God to send one of my chests ashore, to give me a chance of showing these heathen rascals what we Christians can do.”

Charles pointed out to the scheik, that it was unnecessary to destroy the wood for the sake of the iron. Both were valuable, and both might be preserved by the skill and means possessed by his countryman.

As the scheik eagerly listened, Dick produced a key which was hung round his neck by a string, along with his knife, and opening the chest, exposed his treasures to the rapacious eyes of the Arabs,—the authority of their leader being scarcely sufficient to prevent them from seizing and dividing the spoil; but his sagacity told him the tools would be most useful to him, if they were left in the custody of the man who alone knew how to use them; and he commanded the chest to be delivered entire to Dick, who soon selected his implements, and showed the scheik how readily the nails

might be extracted, and every piece of iron made available.

The countenance of the Arab was as rigid as ever, but his glistening eye showed that he duly appreciated this important acquisition. He ordered the camels to be laden with as much of the wreck as they could bear ; the valuable chest, after being locked, was placed on his own beast, and he declared his resolution to have the tents moved that very morning to the well at the rocks, that they might be near the beach to collect all the wreck the sea would bestow on them.

Charles was much alarmed at the plan of an encampment so near to the cave, and discussed with his friends, as they toiled after the laden camels, the means of communicating the danger to the garrison, and the chances of their own escape from slavery. Dick said the scheik had a long ladder which he had made for him ; if this ladder could be obtained, they might contrive to scale the rock unseen, and join their friends. But this was too uncertain and hazardous a scheme to be relied on, and Charles regretted that the scheik possessed the means, any moment, if his suspicions were roused, of surprising the unconscious party in the cave, and thus crushing every hope of escape.

"At all events, Charles," said Hubert, "you can linger behind, and write an epistle on this smooth piece of wood, with the clumsy pencil Dick took from his chest. We may find means to send it up to the watch on the walls."

Hubert's suggestion was adopted ; Charles sat down as if fatigued or lame, and, screened by the rest,

scrawled hastily on the wood :—"Get everything on board, and be ready to sail ; watch from midnight till you hear or see us, then send down a rope."

Concealing this beneath his vest, he rose and followed the Arabs to the well, where they rested till the scheik selected a spot for the encampment. To the great relief of the captives he chose to turn the angle, and order the tents to be placed against the rock facing the east. Here the camels were unloaded, and again sent to the harbour for more stores ; and Dick was left behind to guard his chest, as the scheik chose to return himself to the tents to order their removal. Charles, on pretence of a sprained ankle, requested to be left with Dick, to which the scheik consented, taking with him, however, Hubert and his brother as hostages.

CHAPTER VI.

Opening a Communication with the Garrison. The Tents removed. The anxious Night-Watch. The Flight and the Detection. The Embarkation and Attack of the Arabs. Escape of the Boat. Charles relates the Story of the Captivity. A Ship in sight.

No sooner were they left alone, than Charles was eager, before the return of the camels from the bay, to open a communication with his friends in the cave. He was soon beneath the walls, and a low whistle announced his presence to the vigilant sentinels. A slight rustling in the bushes above encouraged him to call out, "Quick, quick! Send down a line for a letter."

A few minutes' pause seemed an age; then a fishing-line descended with a convenient hook, to which Charles attached his wooden dispatch, and had the pleasure of seeing it drawn up. "All right!" said Marshall from above. "Can you escape, and when?—all is ready."

Charles rapidly sketched their situation and plans, and Marshall suggested the prudence of delaying the attempt till nearly dawn, that they might embark immediately, for he knew well the vigilance and sagacity of the Arabs.

"Take these matches, Mr. Staunton," continued he, throwing down a small box; "you can then show us a light as a signal—which will be much safer than making any sound. I will keep watch myself. Now

make off, for I see the Arabs coming up from the bay."

Charles made no delay, and observing Marshall's pole was still remaining fast in the sand, he resolved that it should be left as a guide for the expedition in the dark, and returning to Dick, had time to make him acquainted with the arrangements before the Arabs arrived with the camels, and checked private conversation, which might have created suspicion. Dick then assisted the men to unload and to build the wreck into a pile, at the north side of the spot chosen for the tents, as he proposed thus to form a screen for their adventure, and he took care to leave space for a narrow pass between the heaped wood and the rocks.

Two hours after, the whole of the horde, mounted or on foot, with their goats and fowls, were seen slowly moving from the hills,—camels, men, and women, laden with the tents and household goods; and while the Arabs went forward to assist, Charles repeated his last instructions to his faithful confederate.

A very short rest and slight refreshment were allowed to the weary people before the work of raising the tents commenced, in which labour Dick was an important person, directing the Arabs imperiously, assisted by Charles and Hubert as interpreters. He contrived to place the small tent appropriated to the prisoners between that of the scheik and the rampart of wreck-wood without any opposition, to the great gratification of the confederates.

When all was finished, and the camels milked, the whole party were too much exhausted by the un-

wanted toil and the heat of the day to require a repetition of the music they had enjoyed the previous evening, but gladly sought repose. The prisoners also retired to their tent, and were careful to remain still and silent ; yet, wearied as they were, no one could sleep but Dick, who snored profoundly. How the young friends counted the tedious minutes ! and how often they started and looked round, thinking they heard the step of a spy.

"I am glad," whispered Edmund, "that I have my box safe ; these barbarians would have destroyed it at the first attempt they made to produce music."

"Do you think, Charles," said Hubert, "we could recover our rifles ? . . . I marked where they were placed."

"Not a chance of it, Hubert," answered he ; "we must think of our own bodies first. I wish they were safe on the other side of the rock ; and even then, I have a very uneasy suspicion about the ladder which Dick so unluckily built for his masters. I wish we had only had opportunity to render it useless."

In due time Dick was waked up ; he had slept on his tool-chest, which he declared he must carry off with him ; but Charles peremptorily forbade the attempt, as it would have been impossible to move and draw up the heavy chest without such noise as would probably betray them.

At length the moon set ; it was two hours after midnight. All was still, and Charles marshalled his forces. He gently raised the curtain of the tent, stole through the passage behind the stack of wood, and listened outside. Not a sound was to be heard, and summoning the rest, one after another they

cautiously followed him. Dick was of huge bulk, and walked with the unsteady gait of a sailor, and Charles was in mortal terror as he came through the passage. Fortunately all was accomplished without the least noise ; and, turning round the corner, they kept close to the rock, their only guide in the darkness.

They moved on till Charles touched the pole stuck in the sand . . . He paused a moment, breathless with apprehension, then rapidly ignited a match and held it up. By the faint light he saw a rope descend immediately, and seizing Hubert's hand, he whispered a message for a whip to be sent down with a noose for Edmund to stand in, that he might be drawn up. Then Hubert worked himself in sailor fashion up the rope, and Dick was reluctantly compelled to go next. By the time he had reached the rampart, the second rope with the noose descended, and Charles, after placing Edmund's feet securely on it, saw him gently drawn up, and finally ascended himself, drew the rope after him, and fervently cried, "Oh, God ! I thank thee for this signal preservation !"

The descent to the court was easily accomplished, and the tears and greetings of the attached party were earnest and affecting. Lights were burning, but the court was completely emptied ; all was shipped, the captain said, the tide was up, and they waited only for a gleam of light to embark.

"If you please, captain," said Dick, "I know I ought to be hanged ; but I've had to go through a small matter of punishment, you see, sir ; and see if I ever mutiny more, if you'll please to look it over, and put me on the ship's books again."

Captain Stockport looked sternly at the culprit, but the time and circumstances were not favourable to severity ; so Dick was admitted into the new crew without further discussion.

"Come along, Edmund," said Margaret, in a patronizing manner ; "I dare say the dreadful Arabs have starved you, or perhaps given you raw flesh to eat. Come to the kitchen, and have some breakfast."

The rescued captives followed, nothing loath, into the hollow of the rocks, which was devoted to culinary purposes, where a pot of coffee was preparing over the fire.

"We have already breakfasted," said Mrs. Churchill ; "would it not be as well that we should embark while these young mischief-makers are taking their coffee ?"

"Do not delay a moment, Captain Stockport, after you see a glimpse of light," said Charles. "Leave Albert and me to the last, and we will defend the narrow pass, if necessary, till you are in safety."

"I have a plan to hamper the rascals a bit, Mr. Staunton," said Marshall ; "but drink your coffee, and then Abdalla will clear off the kettles, and we can make a start."

"Wait one moment, Marshall," cried Charles, as he finished his coffee and biscuit with a good appetite. "Do not cut down the rope till I take a last look-out, to see that all's safe in the camp of the enemy."

He sprang up the rope, and, looking down on the plain, saw, to his dismay, torches blazing, and the whole of the Arabs assembled, stooping down, and evidently tracking the steps of the fugitives in the light sandy soil.

The start which Charles gave at this alarming sight caused a slight rustling in the bushes, which reached the keen ears of the scheik, who looked up immediately; and Charles was conscious that their eyes met. Before he could retreat, he saw the Arab raise one of the English rifles, and he had just time to throw himself on his face, and escape the shot, which happily passed over him. In a moment he was down in the court, had severed the rope, and told Marshall his unfortunate adventure.

"They will immediately bring the ladder," added he. "Quick! quick! Marshall,—hasten the embarkation. Leave me to my fate; it is all my fault!"

"We'll do the rogues yet," answered Marshall, hurrying Charles through the narrow entrance into the cave; then, while Abdalla held a torch, Charles and Albert assisted Marshall to roll a huge fragment of rock, previously placed in readiness, to the aperture, and to jam it through, so that it was scarcely probable any one would even suspect any opening had ever existed into the court. Then rapidly hastening on to the other entrance, the faint light of breaking day showed a full tide, the party already embarked, and Mrs. Churchill rating the weeping Maude and the trembling Mr. Pinchard soundly for their pusillanimity.

The boat, which was large, was perfectly rigged; the hold, or under-deck, was capacious, and was neatly stowed with the miscellaneous property brought from the wreck. On the half-deck some poles had been planted, over which was spread the portable tent, as a retreat for the ladies, and with a sail a separate shelter was formed for any of the rest who chose to

resort to it. Spare yards and sheets, an anchor, arms, ammunition, and other matters, were commodiously arranged ; and when Captain Stockport welcomed his passengers into the *Little Madras*, as he called the boat, it was with a revival of his nautical pride.

Marshall, taking the captain apart, made him acquainted with the detection of their retreat by the Arabs, and advised him to steer south at first, to escape an attack from the harbour. The young men seized the oars, Marshall took the helm, while the captain stood, with his arms folded, anxiously watching for daybreak.

"Get us over the reefs and sandbanks, Mr. Marshall," said he, "and we will then spread all our canvass, for, thank God, an east wind is rising. Well, Mrs. Churchill, what did you please to want? Is the hurricane-house not to your taste?"

"I wish to know where you intend to go, and how long the voyage may last?" asked Mrs. Churchill.

"I trust, my good lady," answered he, "that with fair winds we may, by God's help, reach Cape Verd in ten days. We are provisioned for double that time, so make yourself easy, madam, and request the pretty young lady to hold her tongue, and not sing out signals to the Arabs."

Maude Seyton was in hysterics, her brothers were kindly soothing her, and Dr. Cameron was lending his aid, though not without some sarcasms on the weak conduct of his young patient.

"See, Miss Seyton," said he, "how calm and useful these two girls are. They confide in the skill of their friends, and in the mercy of their God ; while you are endangering the safety of all by your cries, and ex-

hausting your own strength by this unconstrained violence."

Captain Stockport would probably have spoken more gently to his friend Mrs. Churchill, but he wished her to retire to the tent, for he had caught a signal from Albert, whose watchful eyes had discovered some movement on the very summit of the lofty cliffs above the cave. A few moments revealed to the whole party in the boat the figures of the Arabs on the heights, to which they had ascended on failing to discover their fugitive captives in the rocks. A loud cry proclaimed that the little bark had been seen, and an ill-directed volley fortunately passed harmlessly over it. But the enemy were loading their muskets again, and the danger was great, for their next attempt might prove more successful.

"Pull away, my hearties!" cried Hubert, greatly excited, "we are in twelve fathom water, Captain Stockport,—I have just sounded. May we hoist the sails?"

"Relieve Dick at the oar, my good young fellow," answered the captain; "he is an abler hand at the ropes than you. Thanks, gentlemen. Lend a hand,—up with the canvass. God spare us for five minutes, and we may defy the infidel rascals."

The second volley was equally unsuccessful, though the unlucky Mr. Pinchard, who had ventured from the shelter of the tent to learn the cause of the tumult, fell prostrate at the sound of the report, and persisted in declaring that he was killed.

"Nothing of the kind," said Dr. Cameron; "rise, Mr. Pinchard, and make yourself useful; take an oar, my good sir."

"I can row, doctor," said he, "but not while in reach of the guns of those terrible men. I know I should be sacrificed."

"Very well, then keep quiet, sir, and let somebody else be sacrificed for you," grumbled the doctor.

Away flew the little boat, the swelling sails filled with a brisk wind; and Captain Stockport, with a cheerful countenance, declared the next shot could not reach them. But he was mistaken; at the last attempt of the angry opponents, a ball struck one of the masts, and shivered a large splinter from it.

"That was my dear old rifle," said Charles, with a groan; "I know the crack well. The dogs have not a piece that could carry so far. It was the pride of my arm-chest, and now I fear I shall never see it more."

"I hope not, sincerely, Mr. Staunton," said Dr. Cameron, "as you would meet with it probably in the hands of the dark gentlemen who are so much irritated by our escape from their clutches. But I really wonder, Charles, that this favourite old servant of yours should have been so disloyal as to make such a *fracas* among old friends."

"Please, doctor," said Dick, "if you be talking of this here splinter, never you heed it. I've made out as how the ship's best tool-chest is safe stowed below; and when we're fairly out of reach of yon chaps, I'll splice the ould mast cleverly. Now isn't it a queer go, Mr. Marshall, that them outlandish brutes haven't a boat among 'em; and could no more set about building one than I could shape them topsails that Miss Hangerlinny carries."

"The sand is the ocean of the Arab, Dick," said

Albert, "and the camel is his ship, which he guides in safety through pathless deserts, without compass or chart."

"Were your captors in truth Arabs?" asked Miss Keenmark, "the descendants of Ishmael, whose hand was against every man, and every man's hand against him? Or were they not rather the fiery and bigoted Moors?"

"They were, doubtless, madam," answered Albert, "descendants of the true Arabs, of which race numerous wandering tribes frequent the desert; the aborigines of the states of Barbary confine themselves to the mountain districts, and are a brave, robust, and independent people. The Bedouin Arabs are not more distinct from the native tribes of Africa in form and feature, than they are in manners and in their unconquerable nomadic habits. The African tribes, though impelled to move from one spot to another by the necessity of obtaining food, or by the love of plunder, still keep within a narrow circuit, which they regard as their home."

"Rest on your oars, my faithful friends," cried Captain Stockport; "the enemy have sailed off, and with this fair breeze we may reckon to be soon out of sight of that unchristian coast, which I hope never more to set my foot on."

The weary rowers rested, and watched with silent thankfulness the rising sun. The ladies all came out on the little deck, and Captain Stockport, a truly pious man, offered up the usual morning prayers, with a special thanksgiving for their preservation.

"Now, Mr. Staunton," said Julia, "will you be so kind as to relate your adventures to us, for I can learn

nothing from Hubert but his grand intention of making a plan of the enemy's encampment, and a calculation of their forces ; a very useless labour, I should think."

"And Edmund is half asleep," said Margaret, "and had better take a rest under the tent ; but I expect to obtain a great deal of information from him, that you cannot give, Mr. Staunton."

"No doubt of it," replied Charles ; "he will be able to tell you how the kouscoussoo was cooked, and the household managed, for he had the valuable privilege of *entrées* to the ladies' tents. Well, I must begin with my unlucky shot at the ostrich."

"For which piece of imprudence you deserved to be crowned with a fool's cap, Mr. Staunton," observed Mrs. Churchill.

"Be more merciful, I pray you, Mrs. Churchill," continued he. "It is not for you to know the feelings of a sportsman ; the bewildering fascination of winging one's first ostrich. I plead guilty to an oblivion of everything but the sport, and dearly I paid for it."

Then Charles sketched his short experience of a captivity which, setting aside the anxiety of mind, was certainly not very severe. The girls laughed heartily at the happy effects produced by Edmund's musical entertainment, and Marshall observed—"I will say, sir, that I believe it was just God's will that you should fall into this bit of trouble, for the sake of bringing poor Dick off from them varmin."

"And now, ladies, turn all your bright thoughts to the Cape Verd islands," said Charles.

"If such be really our destination," said Miss Keenmark, "it will be necessary that I should, with my

pupils, make such studious preparation as our means allow, to enable us to regard with the anointed eyes of knowledge, the strange shores where we may next be located. The limited scope for observation that I enjoyed during my short residence in a country, marked in past ages as the abode of learning, impiety, and magic, has unfortunately supplied no trace upon my tablets."

"Truly, madam," said Dr. Cameron, "your 'Scenes in Africa,' up to this time, must be rather fanciful than real. God be thanked, we are afloat again ! for, like my old friend here, I think there is no scene so glorious as the open sea, with a worthy vessel and a fair wind."

"As the islands we are approaching," continued Miss Keenmark, "were only discovered by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, little of the early history is known ; but the physical geography may prove interesting."

"As I have visited the inhabited islands of this numerous group," answered the doctor, "I can tell you, madam, that their most remarkable production is salt : in botany, the EUPHORBIVM is of most importance ; and the animal world rejoices in fine specimens of *the Ass*."

On the third day of the voyage the wind changed ; it was necessary to resume the oars, and, after a day of hard toil, wearied with this monotonous drudgery, the young men sighed for more suitable employment for their activity ; and the ladies wearied of reading, of their cramped position, and of their bread and water diet, longed for the termination of the voyage.

"We were better off in the cave than we are here,"

whimpered Mr. Pinchard, "for we lived more like Christians. I am sick of cold salt meat and lukewarm water. Could not a fire be made at the stern, and some coffee prepared, captain?"

"Take a little wine to flavour the water," answered Captain Stockport; "for not even for the ladies will I permit cooking. Fire is a more dangerous enemy to contend with than water; I will have no fire in the *Little Madras*."

The sun was so scorching that it might almost have sufficed to heat Mr. Pinchard's coffee; and one after another the weary men threw down the oars, quite exhausted. What a shout of joy burst from all when Marshall cried out, "A sail!"

"But it may be a pirate, or an enemy's ship," faltered Mr. Pinchard.

"Or the *Flying Dutchman*," said Charles, laughing.

"He's never to be seen in these here seas," said Dick in a low tone, touching his cap as he added, "God save us!"

"Run up a signal, Mr. Marshall," said Captain Stockport; and a signal-flag was hoisted in a moment.

Some anxious moments intervened; then Marshall reported that the signal was answered, and the vessel was lying to for them. The scorching heat of the noonday sun was unheeded, the oars were resumed with vigour, and in a short time they were alongside a large, handsome, trimly rigged vessel.

CHAPTER VII.

On board the strange vessel. Suspicions of the Captain's veracity. A strange Watering-place. The Coast of Africa again. The *Little Madras* brought into Harbour. A Serpent in the Tent. A Walk to the Woods. Mr. Pinchard's encounter with a Porcupine.

WITH what sensations of thankfulness the stout-hearted, as well as the timid, stepped on the deck of that unknown vessel may be easily imagined. They were received with little demonstration of welcome by a tall, dark-countenanced man, whose imperious tone, rather than any distinction of dress, denoted him to be the commander. "What is your nation? How have you lost your ship? What have you saved?" were the questions he rapidly addressed to Captain Stockport, who answered them civilly, but concisely.

"You are a mighty large lot," said the stranger, looking round. "I cannot afford to give you all accommodation without a fair remuneration."

"I have the means of paying your demands, sir," answered Captain Stockport, somewhat contemptuously, as he pointed to his strong chest just drawn on deck.

"Bills or gold?" asked the man.

"Gold, sir; amply sufficient to satisfy you," replied the irritated captain.

"Have no fears, my good fellow," said Charles. "We are gentlemen, and have tolerably well-filled

purses, as we have had small opportunity of spending since we left England ; with the exception of an extortionate hotel charge on the coast yonder."

The man stared at Charles, and became rather more civil. He conducted the ladies to his own cabin, which was by no means a model of order and cleanliness ; and, after making certain financial arrangements with the gentlemen, ordered some refreshments, and introduced himself as Captain Edwards, from Charleston, bound to the Cape with merchandize. What this merchandize was, Captain Stockport could not make out, and he could not divest himself of the suspicion that the vessel was a slaver ; and they had not been many days on board before he felt convinced, from observations communicated to him by Marshall and Dick, who mingled with the sailors, that the real destination of the vessel was the east coast of Africa.

Edwards had, however, agreed to land his passengers at the Cape ; and, though his manners were reserved and morose, and his mate and crew rough and coarse men, with whom he rudely requested his passengers to hold no communication, yet, in the joy of their escape, they overlooked small annoyances. Captain Stockport grew daily more uneasy, and Marshall and he secretly arranged, that if they should touch at Sierra Leone or Cape Palmas for water, to land at once, and wait for some vessel of safer appearance : but on making inquiry of Edwards, he answered, in his usual reserved way, that his watering-place lay farther south.

This increased the suspicions of the captain and Marshall, who kept a strict watch on the proceedings of Edwards, and when they had reached 9° south lati-

tude, they saw a boat sent out with the mate and six sailors. The coast was then distinctly in sight; but instead of lying to for the boat, the sails were spread, and no more was seen of the party that went off.

Once more, about 19° south, they were roused one morning by the cry of "Land!" and to the astonishment of the English seamen, a low coast was visible, at not more than a mile's distance.

"I doubt your obtaining water on these unpromising shores," observed Captain Stockport to Edwards.

"I know my watering-place, Captain Stockport," answered he. "We shall land here for two days at least, to take in water, clean, and paint, as I must have my ship neat and trim to go into harbour. If these young men are fond of sport, there's plenty to be had out yonder; and as many as like may go on shore, for they will only be in our way here."

The young men were perfectly ready to take their guns for a day's sport; though Captain Stockport hesitated, and the females entreated not to be left alone.

"Do allow us to land also, mamma," said Julia; "I quite long for an adventure, and Miss Keenmark might then really take a survey of the coast of Africa."

"Pray let us go, Aunt Churchill," added Maude, "for I am dying from the pestilential air of this close, filthy cabin."

"What do you say, Dr. Cameron," demanded Mrs. Churchill: "ought we in common prudence to leave the ship we were so anxious to set foot in?"

"It is but for two days, madam," replied he; "and we really seem to have no choice left. But let me

recommend you, my dear ladies, to take your purses with you, and any things that are of value, for these fellows look very like thieves."

"And, Dr. Cameron," said Margaret, "Norah told me this morning, that she heard that dreadful-looking negro cook, who gets drunk and swears, say, 'Cappin would tro de women in de sea; but he no like de men and de guns.'"

"You need have no fears, Margaret," said Albert, smiling, "you have a formidable force to protect you; we shall carry all our arms on shore, and then I think we may defy your black pirate."

It was finally agreed that the whole of the passengers should be landed while the necessary operations were completed in the vessel; the gentlemen proposing to ramble in search of game, while the ladies would have the luxury of fresh air and recreation. The long-boat was therefore lowered, and the party, with such necessaries as they required, put on shore, —though Edwards had murmured greatly at the absurd folly of taking portmanteaus; but Norah insisted that the "misthress" and the "childer" should have their clothes washed and aired "on the grass."

They landed in a small bay, where the luxuriant mangrove spread its interlaced branches along the shore, and low jungle rendered the passage to the interior difficult; beyond this a clear spot was found from which the new visitors had a view of a dusky plain surrounded by a belt of trees, indicating the existence of forests, while across the plain ran a shallow stream, which from its deep bed, probably swelled into a river after the periodical rains. On this spot the

tent that had been their dwelling among the rocks was again pitched under the spreading branches of the mangrove, and the united friends, freed from the confinement of the close ship, and the *espionage* of the gloomy captain, felt an exhilaration of spirits they had long been unaccustomed to.

"Captain Stockport," said Dr. Cameron, "I should like to unravel the mystery of that boat putting off to the coast."

"Ask Mr. Marshall what he thinks about it," answered the captain.

"Indeed, gentlemen," answered Marshall, "if I may say my say about it, I should set it down that the fellows went over to some of them smuggling Portuguese stations to buy up slaves. But when and where they are to be shipped is another question."

"This vessel will never come to an anchor at the Cape, said the captain. "He must intend either to carry us round to the east coast, or to leave us here. In either case, we will have a fight for it. You are all well armed?"

They had all been well warned, and had secured arms and ammunition in abundance.

"That is well, gentlemen," continued the captain. "We have a considerable force, and will not, therefore, give up our passage to the Cape, as agreed for. As soon as the ship is watered, I will have an explanation from Captain Edwards, and if he prevaricate, I can threaten him that we will seize the ship, and carry it into harbour ourselves; though I should be loth to do it."

This determination was received with enthusiasm by the gallant allies; but Dr. Cameron observed,—

"Remember, my friends, we are still in danger, and I would advise you to prepare for dealing with a rogue, if not a pirate. Let us provide for the worst. Our stores are insufficient for a siege. The boat is just landing with the water-casks, and Mr. Beaumont and I, two unsuspected characters, will request to return in it for some books and other trifles which we really want; but we will take care to bring away more important property."

Captain Stockport smiled, and said, "Doubtless we may be detained here for some days, and it would be safe to be provided with necessaries; but I do not think, doctor, we need dread a second adventure like that in the desert. I leave all this, however, in your hands."

When the watering-boat touched the coast, Dr. Cameron went up and courteously requested to be allowed to return in it, as the ladies had forgotten some little necessaries, and he proposed to bring out their own boat, the *Little Madras*, to enable them to procure these trifles, as well as the cooking-apparatus, which would be useful if they were detained a few days on shore."

"The women brought out a perfect cargo of fixtures," grumbled Edwards. "What in the world do they want from my ship? My men have work enough, without rowing you backwards and forwards on your pleasure trips."

"Our own people can row, Captain Edwards," said Albert, "as you know, and we have certainly a right to use our own boat, and our own stores. We merely ask from you the favour to be rowed out to the vessel."

"Then I'll thank ye, stranger," growled out the

angry man, "to look only after that that's yer own, and not go rummaging over my ship."

"You will not usually find gentlemen guilty of such impertinent curiosity," said Albert; "we merely want some trifles of our own that we need."

So saying Albert and Dr. Cameron, now joined by Marshall and John, walked forward to the boat, regardless of the scowls and muttered oaths of Edwards, who sent two men, however, to row them to the vessel, and return immediately with the boat, leaving them to shift for themselves.

They succeeded in lowering their own boat, with its oars, and, by Marshall's advice, brought from their property the carpenter's chest, disguised under the covering of a travelling-trunk, with the powder and shot, ropes and straps, which had been left in the hold of their boat; but every morsel of provision, biscuit, wine, and flour, had been removed, and could not be found. Dr. Cameron had fortunately locked up his cabin before he left the vessel, and was able to remove his own private property, consisting of a bag of coffee, a loaf of sugar, and a chest which contained his valuable medical stores, all of which he now placed in the boat.

"I wish we could have met with Captain Stockport's strong-box," said Marshall.

"Doubtless the knave has locked it in his cabin," answered the doctor.

"He surelie thinks, sir," said John, "that we're boun' to run off without paying t' reck'ning."

"He can watch us too well to have any fear of that, John," answered the doctor; "and we must keep our eyes on the ship."

"Why, Lord help us, sir!" said John, "what could

we do, if we were to see her startin' ; there'd be little chance of runnin' after her."

They brought the *Little Madras* safe to shore, and moored it to the huge roots of a mangrove ; and finding Edwards and his crew had carried the boat up the stream to the fresh water, they were enabled to transfer their freight to the tent without notice. A cooking-spot was arranged a few yards distant, and all prepared for operation, but at present there was nothing to cook. The fates, however, were propitious ; for Charles and Hubert, who had been rambling in the adjacent woods the whole morning, returned with a bag of wild Guinea-fowl of tolerably good size, which, with a part of the biscuit they had first brought out, formed no bad dinner.

"The *Pintado*," observed Miss Keenmark, "was considered a luxury even by the ancient Romans. We have its description by Aristotle, and most accurately by Clytus, one of his pupils, under the name of *Meleagris*. I am glad to have the opportunity of viewing the bird in a state of nature."

"And I am sure you will be glad to eat them, too, Miss Keenmark," said Margaret ; "for Norah and Abdalla have roasted them beautifully in their kitchen under the mangrove roots."

"How can you enjoy this kind of Robinson Crusoe life, Margaret," said Maude ; "to me it is intolerable. I wrote to my dear friend Matilda Oswald to fix the very time of my arrival at the Cape ; and I know how much she, as well as her brother Augustus, who has a more than common interest about me, will feel this delay. Conceive their distress when it is rumoured that the *Madras* is missing, Captain Stockport ! Nor

would it console them much to know that I was on these frightful shores, exposed to the attacks of savages and wild beasts, without any of the comforts, scarcely the necessaries, of life ; seated on Mr. Staunton's gun-case, and eating my dinner on a portmanteau instead of a table ! ”

The two younger girls laughed heartily at Maude's lamentation, notwithstanding her pathetic allusion to Captain Oswald's despair ; her brothers made her a sofa of a mattress, while Captain Stockport pledged himself, if his life was spared, to conduct her safely to Cape Town ; and the young gentlemen declared that they would defend her against savages and wild beasts.

Nevertheless, as night drew on, by Marshall's advice, they lighted a fire before the tent, as the tangled brakes on the borders of streams are favourite haunts of wild animals. A watch of two, changed every two hours, was arranged ; and, in fact, there was little sleep for any, for strange howls and roars were heard during the night, creating uneasiness among the sober-minded, but delighting the young and adventurous, who proposed a lion-hunt next morning, and were only deterred from it by the fears and entreaties of the anxious females.

The necessary supply of provision for so large a party was reluctantly granted by Edwards the succeeding day ; and the success of the sportsmen had precluded them from any dread of famine. The burning heat of the climate kept the females confined to the shelter of the tent at mid-day, where they amused themselves with books or light work. Maude, with childish lamentations, reclined on her mattress,

bemoaning her destiny. Suddenly she sprang up, declaring that she felt the shock of an earthquake ; but as no one else had experienced it, and as Miss Keenmark showed positively that they were not in the region of earthquakes, the assertion was treated as a jest, except by Mr. Pinchard, who was as usual in attendance on the ladies, and whose terrors led him to believe in every imaginable misfortune, from a volcano bursting out under his feet to a storm of snow burying him alive.

"How can you know, Miss Keenmark, that such things may not happen here?" he cried. "What would become of us, if the sea were to rise and sweep us away? Had we not better escape?"

"Stay where you are," said Mrs. Churchill ; "earthquakes keep to their proper places."

"But, Aunt Churchill, I did feel my couch tremble," said Maude.

"And sure enough, it's myself that says that same, and isn't the matthrass bewitched?" said Norah, lifting it up, and revealing a large black snake coiled up beneath it. Maude and Angeline shrieked and fled from the tent, followed by Mr. Pinchard, while Margaret, taking the corner of the mattress from Norah, flung it down over the reptile, and assisted by Miss Keenmark, heaped upon it the gun-cases and boxes which they could raise, to prevent the snake from escaping. In the mean time Mrs. Churchill and Julia had found some of the men, who soon despatched it. Miss Keenmark said it was the black adder, a most venomous creature, the bite of which was certain and speedy death : and every one felt thankful to God for their escape.

As evening drew on, a fresh breeze rose from the sea, and, protected by the gentlemen, the ladies ventured to walk out to enjoy the air, and examine the new country.

"What an adventure it would be," said Julia, "if we should encounter any travellers in this strange region!"

"If you encountered any one, my dear," said her mother, "it would probably be a naked and barbarous negro, in the lowest scale of humanity."

"The greater probability is, that we are far remote from any inhabited region," said Captain Stockport; "and it yet remains a mystery to me why that ill-looking American has touched at this desolate shore, where he cannot even expect to obtain slaves; for Mr. Marshall and I have strong suspicions that he is a slave-dealer."

"And I'll tell you now, captain, what made me find him out," said Marshall: "I didn't like to say much, when we were in his power, for fear of frightening the young ones. It was when we were in the latitude of Benguela, before he sent his men off to shore, that he began to palaver me, and ask some questions about the coast, and about my doings with the woolly heads. 'Then,' says he, 'you are a sharp, knowing chap, *you are*, and would be up to a bit of trade of that sort yet; you might get a good berth as a mate, I guess.' But I let him know I was Captain Stockport's mate yet; and, moreover, that I'd turned Christian sin' them days, and would have no more to do with hunting up poor black critters. He turned up his nose at me, and said no more; but my thinking is, that if he could meet with them,—and there is

people hereabout worse than them Arabs,—he wouldn't mind selling us all for slaves, and sneaking off with his booty."

"But you are a numerous and well-armed party," said Mrs. Churchill. "Could you not insist on Captain Edwards fulfilling his agreement to convey us to the Cape?"

"He has twenty desperate fellows still left in his ship, madam," replied Marshall; "and then, you see, ladies are a bit in the way when one comes to fighting."

"We have no right to come to fighting, Mr. Marshall," said the captain. "Every master has a right to command the vessel put into his hands, and no one can legally oppose his will; he could even leave us here, if he thought it expedient: but then he would forfeit the remuneration we agreed on."

Marshall looked significantly at Dr. Cameron, who said, "I fear the rogue would not scruple to pay himself, for he has possession of the cash-box."

"You cannot think Edwards is a downright pirate," said Captain Stockport; "he would surely not rob me on God's highway, the free ocean. To-day they are busy working, washing, and painting the ship, but to-morrow I will ask for an explanation of his plans... What are you after now, Mr. Charles?"

The party had rambled about a mile from the tent, and entered a thick wood, where low thorny bushes were mingled with tall palms and other forest-trees, around which the fragrant yellow jasmine twined and hung its graceful flowers. In the midst of the bushes, Charles had perceived the movement of an animal; he fired immediately, and a large porcu-

pine rushed from the bushes, directly against the legs of Mr. Pinchard, who shrieked with the pain produced by the sharp quills, and cried out—"Kill it, Mr. Beaumont; kill it! or we shall all be destroyed!"

Another shot finished the porcupine, and without paying much attention to the groans of the wounded man, the sportsmen eagerly plucked out the quills of the animal to bear away as trophies; this being the first African game they had killed with the exception of a few guinea-fowls. The sudden decline of the tropical day admonished them to return to the encampment, where the men put up a sailcloth tent to shelter them from the night dews; then the mattresses were all raised and examined, and Dick pegged down the tents so firmly that not even a snake could crawl underneath, before they retired to take their rest, for the last time, as they proposed on these shores.

CHAPTER VIII.

An alarming Discovery. The Parting Salute. The distressed Party at the Tents. An Expedition. A Lion on the way. Plan for Removal. Building a Sleigh. Departure, and crossing the Mountains.

MARSHALL waked Captain Stockport early, drew him from the tent, and reported that, startled by some unusual appearances in the ship, he had been watching the proceedings with his glass, and felt persuaded they were weighing anchor.

"Call Dick Wright and some of our young friends to take an oar," exclaimed the captain; "we will, at all events, make the fellows explain, and demand the restoration of our property."

The young men were soon roused, and made all speed to the bay where they had left the boat moored beneath the mangroves. What was their consternation to find it gone.

They looked at each other for a moment in silence; then, each according to his mode, showered strong epithets on the knavish American. Charles fired his rifle to attract the attention of the crew, and in a few minutes was answered by a parting salute from a gun. Then sails were hoisted and a black flag run up, denoting truly the character of the ship and its commander.

"How shall we report the catastrophe to Mrs. Churchill?" said Albert. "She may well reproach us for negligence."

"We deserve it," said Captain Stockport, bitterly.

"And yet, Mr. Beaumont, Marshall and I have alternately watched during the night; we have listened to every sound, and how we missed the splash of the oars is unaccountable."

"I see through their tricks now, captain," observed Marshall. "I did mark, as we set out last night, two men gathering crabs on the shore. Sure enough they would be spies, and as soon as we were out of sight, would away with the boat, while I was reckoning it lay all snug down there. I don't see how I can show my face to the women, nor what is to become of them, God help them."

"I trust He will, Marshall," said the doctor; "for how we are to move from this unsafe spot, with them crippling our steps, I cannot see."

"And the dog has taken care," continued Marshall, "to leave us in a place where he hopes we shall never be able to bear witness against his ill deeds. It's little short of murder, it is; for depend on it we are far enough from men of any colour, and the nighest are a savage crew, who would cut us down like beasts, and, for aught I know, eat us after all."

"We must decide on some movement soon," said the doctor, "for these shores are marshy and unwholesome, and if we stay we must soon be laid up with fever and ague."

"What are you all consulting about?" asked Margaret Churchill, springing lightly down from a rock, followed by her sister and Norah. "We were alarmed at hearing a gun from the ship; Maude is screaming, Mr. Pinchard is trembling, Angeline is chattering, and mamma allowed us to come down to the beach to ask you if the battle was begun."

"Ah! Margaret," said Charles, "the battle is ended, and the conquerors have carried off the spoil. Now, Miss Julia, here we are, according to your ardent desire, cast away on a desolate land, where we may have to pass our lives."

"How interesting! I must tell mamma, and arrange our plan for a colony," cried the thoughtless girl, skipping along to tell her news, followed by her more prudent sister, in alarm for the consequences.

"Mamma," said the breathless Julia, "the ship has sailed away and left us here, where we must remain."

"I feared as much," said Mrs. Churchill; "but thank God we have still the same resource as before—the *Little Madras*."

"They have stolen it. We have nothing but the tents, and the kettle and the frying-pan, and the cups," continued the thoughtless girl, laughing.

But Mrs. Churchill's pale countenance checked her volubility. With compressed lips the mother turned to Miss Keenmark, saying, "My poor children!"

"God will not desert us if we pray to him, trust in him, and act vigorously," said Miss Keenmark.

At this moment the melancholy party from the beach joined them. Captain Stockport took Mrs. Churchill's hand, saying, "Can you forgive me, madam?"

"Words are idle, Captain Stockport," answered she. "You have ever done your duty; show me the whole truth. Where are we?—what have we to dread?—and what ought we to do?"

"We are on an uninhabited shore," answered he, sternly; "on the north lie regions inhabited by tribes noted for cruelty and malignity; on the south, a

parched desert; on the east, wilds and deserts untrodden and unknown, and above all, impossible to be traversed on foot by delicate females."

The shrieks of Maude and Angeline, from within the tent, who had just discovered the extent of their distress, gave more emphasis to the shake of the head with which the worthy captain concluded his uncheering relation.

"If ye please, captain," said Dick, "there seems a fair lot of wood hereabouts: I have tools, and if you'll just order me to work, I think I could manage to build a bit of a boat that would hold us cannily."

Mrs. Churchill caught at the hope, but the doctor declared they must not remain among the marshes till a boat could be built.

"Then we must all set out, like a gipsy party, carrying our own pans and kettles," said Julia.

"But who can carry these trunks, and portmanteaus, and mattresses," answered Margaret.

"Couldn't we pick up a donkey, think ye?" asked John.

"Sorra a taste of a donkey, if it wouldn't be yersel," said Norah; "and didn't ye hear the master tell ye, John Scott, that it were nothin' in the world but the savages we had round about, and would it be the savages would dale in donkeys, and them atin man or baste, 'live or dead, ill luck to them!'"

John's eyes were opened to his error, and the question of the exodus remained as unsettled as ever. At length, at the suggestion of Mrs. Churchill, an exploring party was arranged; a hasty breakfast was taken, and leaving John and Abdalla to guard the camp, and Mr. Pinchard and Edmund as useless, the

rest of the men, well armed, proceeded in a direction due east. They crossed the entangled wood they had visited the previous evening, Dick pioneering the way with his axe. The early morning air was laden with the perfume from the yellow-flowered mimosa, and many unknown shrubs, richly covered with blossoms; even the bush-covered ground on which they trod sent up an aromatic fragrance. On every side was heard the soft cooing of the turtle-dove, mingled with the sharp, strange cry of the guinea-fowl, flocks of which were roosted in the trees, dispelling any fears of famine. The lofty acacias and forest trees were sufficiently apart to allow air and light to penetrate the wood, and they were enabled to see some distance before them. They had gone about two miles when Charles cried out, "Now for some real sport, if that object I see moving before us do not turn out to be John's expected donkey."

They moved on a little further, and Charles was making ready for a shot, when Albert laid his hand upon his arm, saying, "Stop, Charles! It would be advisable to allow that royal brute to go on his way unmolested, for, if I mistake not, it is the lordly lion, the king of the forest."

"Aye, you'd best not mell wi' yon chap, Mr. Staunton," said Dick. "I've come over a few of his sort afore, and it's safest to give 'em a wide berth."

"It is indeed a large lion," said Marshall, "and it's quite as well that his haunts are not nearer the tents, for he would give a terrible fright there. He seems to be making for the river, and I see no good in chasing him."

"Why, Marshall, man!" answered Charles, "we





are all well armed, we are tired of shooting farm-yard fowls, and Hubert and I have a particular fancy for a personal interview with his majesty, So do let us follow, and observe him 'at refection,' as Miss Keenmark would say."

The prudent felt rather unwilling, but the danger was not manifest, so they followed the track of the stately animal in cautious silence towards the stream, from which they were not more than a hundred yards distant. Keeping under the cover of the trees, they approached within twenty yards of him, and then saw, among the tall reeds and long grass that skirted the stream, the huge animal resting with his breast on the ground and his fore-legs stretched out, lapping the water with a loud noise.

Charles felt rather agitated, but he knew his friends were ready to support him ; he fired, and wounded the beast, which sprung up with a tremendous roar, lashed its tail with fury, and turning towards its antagonists sprung forward. Pierre fled, uttering loud cries ; but a volley struck the animal to the ground, mortally wounded. All drew a long breath, and then went forward to view the prize. He was a handsome animal, about ten feet long, with a gold-coloured shaggy mane that almost swept the ground ; and as they looked on his strong, large teeth, displayed in the agonies of death, they agreed that an unarmed man might be pardoned for a little trepidation if he met a lion.

"We hear of lions, who, having once tasted human flesh, become from choice man-eaters," said Dr. Cameron : "but the animal will generally walk quietly away from the presence of his superior, man, unless

attacked or famished. Such is his strength, and such the fear he inspires in the weaker inhabitants of the forest, that he readily provides himself with food, and does not regard man as his natural prey. Nevertheless, when wounded as this grand fellow was, he becomes a dangerous enemy, and I will not say that I should have shown more courage than your cowardly valet, if I had not relied faithfully on your good rifles."

"We must have his skin," said Hubert, "to place beside the adder in Edmund's projected museum."

With the aid of John and Dick, the beast was skinned, the skin washed in the river, and stretched over a mimosa-bush to dry; then taking the river for a guide, the party, leaving Pierre to make his way as he could, proceeded forward. About a mile beyond the scene of conflict they came in sight of a ridge of mountains, well wooded, running north and south. Leaving the river, which diverged in a northern direction, they reached the base of the mountains, along which ran the stony bed of a river, now dry, which formed a pleasanter road than the bush-encumbered ground of the forest. They followed this path south till they reached a lower elevation less covered with wood than the higher ridges; and mounting to the summit, they looked down on wide tracts of forest scenery,—thick brakes and lofty trees, beneath which rose long coarse grass. Myriads of birds were darting among the branches, and the chattering of monkeys gave hope of fruit-trees.

"Well, what do you say, Captain Stockport?" said Dr. Cameron. "I have mighty objections to the fever-haunted coast; but you are commander. Are we to venture beyond these mountains?"

"I would assent at once, doctor," answered he "but for the state-cabin passengers ; how could we stow the ladies and all their lumber? . . . Well, Dick, what do you want to say?" For Dick, by several touches of his cap, had indicated his desire to make a speech.

"If you please, captain," he began, "I've been thinkin' on a sleigh for 'em. I marked a good tree or two in our road ; and if so be as it please you, captain, I'll try my hand at it, seeing we can't set up a waggon for want of a bit of iron. I was a top hand as a wheelwright in my time, and I'd warrant to make you a wheel out of any bit of wood."

"In the Pampas of South America, where iron is scarce," said Albert, "raw hide is used to bind the wheels, a material I have no doubt we could procure."

"But, my dear friends," said Dr. Cameron, "to build a waggon would be as serious an undertaking as to build a boat. We must not delay for such a purpose. A rude sleigh might be speedily nailed together, and would be the easiest mode of transporting the baggage. But we must now return, or we shall have a *coup de soleil* in this exposed situation, and we will consider the matter as we go on."

Marshall, who had seemed as anxious for the removal as the doctor, now observed : "It's a sore thing, gentlemen, for a seaman to turn his back on his natural way of life, and take to this land-voyaging, without chart or compass ; but, to tell you my mind, I believe that Yankee is up to the villany of selling us all to his dark friends up yonder," pointing to the north, "and sending them down to seize us and our moveables. I have been a slave myself a bit, and I have no mind to

try that life again ; and it would be the death of the young creatures."

Captain Stockport could not believe that any sailor, though he was not British, could be so vile ; but the rest of the party were alarmed by Marshall's suspicions, and willingly agreed to work at Dick's sleigh, and to put themselves in harness to draw it from the coast.

The skin and head of the lion were carried off, and half a dozen guinea-fowls bagged ; then the party quickened their steps, and soon reached their anxious friends, who had been alarmed by Pierre's return and terrific account of the lion adventure.

"Here is the produce of it for Edmund's museum," said Hubert, showing the immense head of the animal with its grinning teeth, which caused a little screaming among the timid ; the terror of Mr. Pinchard rendered him speechless, and Miss Keenmark sat down to sketch the head, and write a description of it.

"You have done well to relieve us from such an unpleasant neighbour," said Mrs. Churchill ; "is this all the result of your expedition ?"

"Barring the poulthry, which, may be, the mistress wouldn't be notishing," observed Norah.

"I will tell you at once, Mrs. Churchill," answered the doctor, "that we must leave this spot immediately. Have you courage to risk yourself and your family in this wild adventure ?"

"We will not call it an adventure, my good friend," replied she ; "it is a duty. God will guide our path ; and with brave men round me, I cannot fear."

Roused by the appeal, even Mr. Pinchard held up his head, and walked over to join the men, at which desertion Julia could not forbear laughing.

"I have a sword, Miss Julia," said he, "and I served some years ago in the East London Militia. I don't mind fighting in the ranks with other men ; but I see no good in going a-shooting lions. We are not come to eating lion's flesh yet."

"It was my fault," said Charles, "and, after all, Miss Keenmark and Edmund are satisfied, and I dare say we may make something of the skin."

"If we should be out on the voyage when the rains come on," said Marshall, "we shall need all the skins we can raise to make tents and carpets, for we cannot leave shelter while the weather holds."

The plan of the sleigh was then proposed as the most simple and convenient mode of conveying the baggage, the greatest part of which must otherwise be abandoned, a proceeding which was exclaimed against by the females generally.

Mrs. Churchill looked sorrowfully at her children, and then said : "Why delay a moment ? Begin your work, Dick ; all who have strong arms and men's hearts will aid you. In the mean time I will look over our property, and decide on what we must carry away, and what it would be expedient to leave behind."

A keg of flour, and one of biscuit, and a tolerable stock of tea, coffee, sugar, and salt, were the remains of the parsimonious provision granted by Edwards. The gentlemen had some private stores of brandy and cigars. Besides these necessary articles, there were all the trunks and portmanteaux, the useful carpenter's and medicine chests, mattresses and blankets, with a considerable stock of powder and shot, and defensive weapons of all sorts, including six rifles. The tents,

cooking-vessels, and necessary table-furniture, completed their possessions.

An inspection of trunks was instituted. Of Maude's large wardrobe brought from England, the greatest part had been left in the American vessel ; but Norah's vigilance had secured most of the property of her mistress. From this Mrs. Churchill selected all that was absolutely useful or necessary, leaving out what would prove an incumbrance, amongst which were a large number of school-books, music-books, drawing-implements, and a pair of globes. Julia and Margaret looked sorrowful, Miss Keenmark absolutely indignant, as she said, "Better would it be that the body, rather than the mind, should hunger, Mrs. Churchill."

"Starving stomachs unfit the mind for working problems," replied the lady. "We will take the flour-bag rather than the globes, Miss Keenmark."

"And who knows, Miss Keenmark," said Julia, "what a benefit it may not be to some of the savage Benguelas, or Damaras, or other ignorant nations that surround us ; it may lead them to the knowledge that the world is round, and not flat, as they believe."

"I am satisfied, my children," said the governess, with a sigh ; "at all events, we shall have the rare opportunity of studying the physical geography of interior Africa."

"Why do you not unstrap that portmanteau, and reduce its bulk, Mr. Pinchard ?" said Mrs. Churchill ; "remember, you will have to carry it yourself."

"I carry it, madam !" exclaimed the unhappy little man, who was leaning idly against his property ; "I could never even walk any distance, let alone carrying

burthens. I never could do anything in my life well but write."

"Then why do you not write," answered she, "instead of sitting lazily weeping there. Write your travels; no one else has time to keep a journal. But you must walk: though the able and willing arms of our friends will drag on our heavy baggage as long as they are able, we cannot inflict passengers on them."

The terrified man reluctantly opened his large portmanteau, and Edmund kindly assisted him to fill a knapsack with necessary articles, not forgetting his writing-materials; a strap was fixed to the knapsack, and Mr. Pinchard cast looks of despair alternately on the property he was compelled to abandon, and that which was doomed to be placed on his unpractised back.

By this time the party who had been at the wood to cut down trees for the sleigh returned with the necessary spars for the labour, as well as more guinea-fowl, and a basket of eggs. The next morning the grand work was commenced. The sleigh was of the simplest form possible,—a large square frame, with strong bars across the bottom, and a rail round, was raised on slides; two wooden shafts were united by a transverse bar, to which it was proposed that three or four men at a time should be harnessed by leather straps round the waist. Two days completed the frame, the lion's skin was placed at the bottom, over which the mattresses and blankets were laid. The tents were rolled up and carefully strapped to the sides; then the rest of the packages were so arranged as to leave a space for two or three to sit; and though Mrs. Churchill had exclaimed against the plan, she

was at last convinced that they should be glad to rest in turns when they had walked long.

Whilst the carpenters worked at the sleigh, the cooks made a quantity of bread, roasted some birds, and boiled hard a quantity of eggs, as a provision with which to commence the journey ; and as it was proposed to keep as long as possible in sight of the river, the water-casks were to be carried empty. When the sleigh was laden, the whole party retired to rest ; but thoughts and cares kept many awake.

At the first streak of dawn the ladies in the tent were roused by Charles, Hubert, and Edmund, singing "Hark ! the lark," in a most unexceptionable style, which soon brought out the laughing girls to rail at the absurdity of this waste of music on a spot where a lark had never yet sung since the creation of the world. Then came the striking of the tent, the hasty breakfast, the last careful glance round, the sigh of regret for certain treasures abandoned, and Mr. Pinchard's lamentations, in which no one joined, on leaving *home*.

At first no one would take a seat on the sleigh ; even the delicate Maude, and the weeping Angeline leaning on the arm of Pierre, set out to walk ; while Marshall, Charles, and Dick, were the first who submitted to the harness, and stoutly drew the sledge over the path they had previously tracked to the woods.

"She sails pretty smooth," observed Dick, looking fondly at his *craft*, as he called the sleigh ; "but I'se give a look every now and then, masters, and if there's a screw wrong, trust Dick Wright ; we'll soon have her fairly afloat, and no thanks to that rogue of a Yankee."

Through the woods which had been previously explored the females made their way tolerably well, the novelty of the adventure exciting them to prodigious efforts ; but the elegant flowing robes and slight boots of Maude Seyton were unfitted for the occasion—they were soon rent and destroyed by the thorny bushes ; and, at length, bursting into tears, she declared she could walk no longer.

“Set her atop of t’ baggage-waggon,” said Dick ; “if she be a soldier’s bairn, that’s her reet place.”

Maude looked somewhat resentful ; but common misfortune was gradually producing republicanism ; and the only person who preserved an absolute authority was the unbending Captain Stockport. The helpless lady was placed on the sledge, and Albert, John, and Pierre, took their turn in harness.

After reaching the mountains, they turned to the south ; it would not have been prudent to leave the river, but the explorers had declared they had seen a silver thread on the plains beyond, which was certainly water. They resolved, therefore, to walk along the base of the mountains, till they reached a tolerable pass.

The Churchills wore dark merino travelling-dresses and large sun-hats, with strong leather boots, which enabled them to bear the rough roads without much inconvenience ; and they tripped over the stony path or the entangled brushwood with light steps and hearts. With some difficulty, and a few trifling accidents, they crossed the hills, and entered on the wild forest scenery of the plains beyond.

CHAPTER IX.

The Tropical Forest. The Baobab. Music and Dances of the Africans. The Gemsbok. The social Grosbeak. Dangerous encounter with a Lion. The Buffalo conflict. Reach the Mountains.

THE ladies paused in wonder and delight ; the rich tropical scenery, which was not to be seen on the coast, now burst upon them in all its beauty. Tall trees were scattered over the ground, hung with bright-coloured creeping plants, and peopled with a noisy multitude of monkeys and parrots. The plain was covered with high grass, over which the sleigh ran with more ease than among the entangled brushwood on the west of the mountains.

"Charming !" cried Julia ; "we have passed the perils of the Black Forest, and are now entering the enchanted fairy land."

"All very well for you, Julia," said Hubert, "with your large hat, and cool, white umbrella ; but it is no fairyland to us horses."

"Is it not time to take a rest, Captain Stockport," asked Mrs. Churchill. "It is now nearly noon, and to travel under this burning sun is dangerous."

"We sailors are used to all skies, and take few holidays ; but at your request, madam, we'll drop anchor," said the captain.

The tired team drew up under the grateful shade of a large and wide-spreading tree, and, released from the harness, sunk down on the soft grass to rest ;

Edmund in the mean time drawing Miss Keenmark round the tree to remark its immense bulk.

"It must surely be the *Adansonia*, the famous baobab," said she; "I recognize it by its enormous trunk, its umbrella-like form, the tufted leaves of the horizontal branches, and the oblong fruit, suspended by a stalk two feet in length. Yet the *Adansonia digitata* is, I have understood, peculiar to the northern tropical zone. We are now certainly south of the equator."

"The baobab, or monkey bread-tree," said Dr. Cameron, "is certainly most abundant and most gigantic in its proportions on the banks of the Gambia; but it is not confined to that region: it is found in Egypt, Nubia, the Cape Verd Islands, and occasionally in the tropical regions of the south."

"This is the baobab, sure enough, doctor," said Marshall. "Many a tree have I noticed, when we were rowing up the river after that accursed traffic, with a crowd of light-hearted niggers dancing and singing under its shade, little dreaming what was hanging over their heads."

"It is remarkable," observed Dr. Cameron, "that even among the fiercest tribes, the natives of Africa are all passionately attached to music and dancing."

"May I inquire the character of their music?" asked Miss Keenmark.

"The music is rude," answered he, "and, to a cultivated ear, discordant; but the songs, like those of the Arabs, are full of poetic imagery. The dance, which is universally the same, is rather an exhibition of strength than of elegance, and is often kept up with incessant activity by the cheerful performers through

the whole night by the brilliant moonlight. Yet the Africans of the rich tropical regions hate the toil of labour; bountiful nature amply supplies their simple wants, and the relaxing nature of the climate renders them constitutionally indolent and careless in cultivating a soil which spontaneously pours its abundant fruits on them."

Edmund had, while they were talking, climbed the tree, and though much annoyed by the monkeys, which pelted him with the baobab fruit, he succeeded in taking a young parrot from the nest, to show to his friends. "It is one of the most beautiful of the *Psittacidae*, Miss Keenmark," said he, "look at its rose-coloured throat, and tail of bright tourquoise blue. We might easily carry it with us, and it would be a great amusement to teach it to speak English."

"Take it back to its parents, boy," said Mrs. Churchill. "We have already too many mouths to feed, and our own distresses should make us compassionate even to the brute creation."

Edmund was obedient, and restored the parrot, after Miss Keenmark had written a description of it. They then ate their lunch, and the stream being too distant to obtain water, they contented themselves with the juice of the baobab fruit, which the monkeys showered upon them in abundance. This juice was acid, but pressed out into a cup, and sweetened with sugar, it formed a delicious drink. After this refreshment, they spread sail-cloth over the grass for fear of reptiles, and all, except Captain Stockport, who insisted on keeping the first watch, lay down under the shade, and slept profoundly for two hours.

Though the air was still extremely hot, they could

not afford to waste more time, but resumed their march; and reaching a clear, shallow stream, they continued close to the banks for three or four miles, when Charles, who was in harness, suddenly released himself, and, seizing his rifle from the sleigh, called out, "Away, Albert! here is sport!"

In fact, at some distance before them several dark objects were plainly seen, and towards these the two sportsmen, followed by Hubert, set out, leaving the ladies rather agitated. "They might turn out to be tigers," Mr. Pinchard sagaciously suggested; or "*les ours*," screamed Angeline. At which strange surmises Margaret laughed, and Miss Keenmark gravely observed,—

"Tigers and bears are not gregarious animals, they are not *Ruminantia*, nor are they natives of this country. The animals we see are probably of the antelope race, and I am anxious to know the species."

When the hunters were within shot, they fired upon the game, and a large herd of noble antelopes bounded towards the sleigh; but alarmed by the cries of the females, they stopped, turned, and fled towards the south.

"How beautiful and extraordinary!" cried Miss Keenmark; "it is worth all our troubles to have the opportunity of gazing on those wonderful works of the Creator. It appeared to me that this animal had the peculiar conformation of the fabulous unicorn. Can it be possible that such an animal really exists?"

"It is the gemsbok!" cried Edmund, in great delight. "Am I not right, Dr. Cameron?"

The sportsmen just then arrived with a fine specimen of the antelope which they had killed.

"It is really the oryx, or gemsbok," said Dr. Cameron, "distinguished by the erect mane, the long tail sweeping the ground, the dark stripe down the back, and the black bands which adorn the head ; but above all, by the long straight horns, which, when the animal is in motion, and seen in profile, may easily be taken for a single horn."

"Many travellers have been thus deceived," observed Albert ; "and the fables of the ancients doubtless arose from some such error."

"Now listen, Norah," said Charles : "when we set up our tents for the night, you must take care that we have venison steaks for supper. The haunch will be better after it is kept for a day or two."

"Sorra step will I put my foot in it ! Sure is it a donkey you would be atin', Master Charles ? Is the baste thruly mate for Christians ?" demanded Norah.

"I will pledge myself for the excellence of it, Norah," said Albert ; "but this climate is not favourable for preserving meat, and we must eat the haunch to-morrow if we want it good."

With occasional rests on the sleigh, the females, though weary, accomplished a few miles more ; then, as night was rapidly coming on, and the roaring of the wild animals had been more than once heard, Captain Stockport ordered them to come to anchor beneath a large spreading fig-tree. The sleigh was drawn up on one side, sail-cloth spread over the grass, the tent pitched for the females, and while Pierre and Abdalla made a fire for the cookery, John and Dick skinned the oryx, washed and hung the skin to dry, and cut up the animal ; and by the time the arrangements were made for the night, the steaks were

cooked, and all made an excellent supper,—the stream supplying that rare luxury in African travelling, cool and clear water.

Then two large fires were made, and the watch arranged ; after which, Captain Stockport read prayers in a solemn and earnest manner,—a duty he had never omitted morning and evening since they first met ; and much did his pure and simple faith in God, in the midst of troubles, endear him to all his little congregation.

The watches were certainly disturbed by howls and roars from a wooded hill about half a mile distant, though the sleepers were too much fatigued to be roused by any noise. However the fires were effectual, for no intruders ventured near.

At the dawn of day their stout commander whistled up his forces, who started from their repose to look out on the glorious freshness of the morning. They had a hasty breakfast of more steaks, Captain Stockport protesting against the luxury of tea or coffee, when the pure stream ran at their very feet. Carrying away the skin and flesh of the gemsbok, they followed the stream towards the south-east. Margaret and Norah were the stoutest pedestrians among the females ; the others, one after another, were compelled to rest on the sleigh, and increase the toil of the wearied men who drew it.

Herds of animals were occasionally seen through the trees, feeding on the grass ; but being sufficiently provided with meat, the ardent sportsmen were prevailed upon to spare their ammunition. They toiled forward as long as they could endure the heat of the day ; at length, about noon, they halted under a fig-

tree, the fruit of which the monkeys soon permitted them to taste by flinging it down. The figs were small, and somewhat tasteless, but, nevertheless, an agreeable addition to the dinner of venison roasted on a wooden spit. After a short rest they again set forward, for it was only in the freshness of the morning air, or in the cool of evening, that their labour was endurable. They now ventured to deviate from the course of their friendly guide the river, in order to obtain the shelter of a wood which lay to the right.

As they passed a grove of mimosa and fig trees, the searching eye of Edmund discovered an object he had long desired to see, and he eagerly called on Miss Keenmark, Margaret, or anyone who would come, to observe the nest of the social grosbeak. It was a hive-shaped canopy, resembling a thatched haystack, about a yard in height and four feet in circumference, perched on the branch of a large fig-tree. Under the covering, hundreds of nests were placed side by side, each having a small opening, into which numbers of the little inhabitants were passing, alarmed at the unwonted presence of man.

"It is the *Loxia socius*," observed Miss Keenmark; "and not only does each little creature weave its own nest of the wiry grass which springs around, but in community they form the large dome which is attached by its summit to one of the high branches of the tree."

Even after the sleigh moved on, Edmund detained Margaret to watch the curious little birds peep out of their busy village to observe the strange intruders; while Hubert, armed with his gun, declared, to Margaret's great horror, that he would shoot the first that came out of cover.

"Away! Margaret, away!" suddenly cried Edmund, seizing her by the arm and flinging her forward with such force that he fell forward on his face, crying out, "A lion! a lion!" for he had seen the glaring eyes of the animal through the thorny bush.

He had scarcely uttered the words, when the monster sprang from his retreat, and placed his forepaws over the prostrate boy with a deep growl, looking fiercely round at Margaret, who stood motionless with terror, and Hubert who was bravely pointing his gun at him. For a moment the youth hesitated, for all depended on his success. He then fired, and shot the beast in the breast. Though mortally wounded, it sprung over Edmund and seized the arm of Hubert. Margaret shrieked for assistance, then boldly ran forward and spread her white umbrella in the face of the animal, which, instantly releasing Hubert, tore the umbrella from her grasp and dragged it away.

At this moment Albert and Charles, being fortunately out of harness, ran back to their assistance, and firing at once on the dying beast, quickly despatched it. By this time, Edmund had risen, somewhat bruised, and no little terrified, but not injured. Hubert had escaped wonderfully; the lion had seized the very wide sleeves of his blouse, and his arm had escaped with only a deep scratch from the animal's formidable teeth.

Mrs. Churchill reprimanded them for loitering behind, and Mr. Pinchard, in great terror, besought them not to look after birds' nests, disturbing lions "in that way. And he might have eat us all," he groaned out.

"And the worst is, we cannot eat him," said Charles; "we are not not famished down to lion's flesh yet, but we will have the fellow's skin."

The skin of the disturber of the public peace was therefore taken ; and glad to leave the wood, the party moved briskly forward.

After six days of hard labour, duty, inclination, and even necessity, called for a sabbath rest ; and being in sight of a rocky hill, they drew up to it and anchored, as the captain termed it. They had thus a shade and rampart behind their little encampment, and by raising the tent within a circle of packages, they felt an approach to the security of a domestic settlement. They were some hundreds of yards from the river, but a trickling stream from the rock supplied them plentifully with water ; and grateful for many escapes and mercies, they joined with humble and earnest hearts in the holy services read by Captain Stockport and Albert Beaumont.

"Thank God for what we have been able to accomplish !" said Mrs. Churchill, as they sat, in the cool of the evening, gazing on the clear sky, the bright-coloured flowers, and creeping plants that twined round the fig-trees, the tall fan-palm, and many strange and beautiful forest-trees, which were tenanted by playful monkeys and gorgeous parrots. "But still, my prudent friends," she continued, "I trust you have some definite aim, some plan to escape the fierce savages of this unknown country : some hope of reaching a haven of safety."

"I declare that I am unable to walk any further," whimpered Mr. Pinchard. "Do look at my boots, madam ; why should we not stay here ? Some of the people could build us a house, and these young gentlemen could shoot game for us. I would rather live without any of the luxuries I have been accustomed to, than go on, I can assure you, madam."

"Oh! mamma, you cannot resist Mr. Pinchard's appeal," said Julia. "Do let us have huts and gardens; we will tame the guinea-fowls and pigeons, and each keep a pet monkey."

"Your mamma will say with me, Julia," said Miss Keenmark, "that your conversation is too frequently marked by romantic absurdity rather than good sense. Every one has a special duty to fulfil in this world; this duty cannot be accomplished by an idle and useless life in the desert."

"Quite right, my good and sensible friend," said Dr. Cameron; "it is our duty to push on under the prudent direction of our captain, who certainly does not intend to lay up in harbour here, and, doubtless, sees the Indian Ocean before him, though we are not so keen-sighted."

"I do hope, in the end, to see the Indian Ocean," replied the captain; "but we must first traverse many a weary league, and——now, young men, what are you after?" as Charles and Albert sprang up and seized their guns, followed by the rest of the youths.

"Buffaloes, sir," cried Charles; "we are going to provide buffalo-steaks for supper."

"Stop a bit, gentlemen," said Marshall, "and let me give you a bit of advice. I know the buffalo; he is a deep rogue; keep all together and in the open plain, for he's the fellow to be lurking behind a tree, and springing on you before you know where you are, and if he once gets a blow at you with his strong horns, depend on it all's over; he'll pound you to paste under his feet."

This report was rather alarming. Pierre slunk behind Angeline, and Edmund quietly put down his gun, saying to Margaret, who was smiling, "*Le jeu ne*

vaut pas la chandelle." Mr. Pinchard cried out, "For mercy's sake, gentlemen, remember the ladies; don't drive the terrible creatures this way."

But laughing at the fears of their friends, Albert, Charles, and Hubert, followed by Marshall, all well armed, leaped over the enclosure, made their way cautiously among the trees till they came within shot of the herd, then marking a fine animal, the two leaders fired and drew back, allowing the others to advance; the animal, which was wounded in the flank, in the mean time turned wildly round, and followed by several of his friends, charged on the assailants. No time was lost; they drew up in a line, fired a volley, and in the smoke and confusion, retreated with all the speed they could use to the fort. They had just time to spring over the rampart when one of the infuriated beasts reached it, and with a single blow of his helmeted brow scattered the chests and portmanteaux, and would have followed them into the circle, but that Dr. Cameron, taking accurate aim, shot the thick-skinned beast below the shoulder and struck him down. Abdalla then dashed over the opening, and plunged a large knife into his breast.

Pale with horror, the females turned from the sight of the strong brute's dying agonies, and besought their friends to hunt no more buffaloes. The rampart was restored, and the animal was skinned; but no one had any appetite for buffalo-steaks that night. The herd had all fled, leaving another animal dead on the field, and Dr. Cameron proposed that some of the flesh should be dried, as the rainy season could not be far distant, when hunting would be impossible. The carcase was therefore dragged into the enclosure,

large fires were lighted, and after thanking God for repeated mercies, they slept as tranquilly as they could amidst the roaring of the wild animals which scented the game, and even appeared in sight, but durst not approach for fear of the fires.

Early next morning the flesh of the buffaloes was cut up into long thin strips, and hung over the sleigh to be dried in the sun. The skins were washed also, to be dried, as they would be of use to the travellers, and the head was reluctantly abandoned by Miss Keenmark and Edmund, who were never tired of contemplating the huge, rugged horns, hanging over the eyes, each horn a foot in breadth at the base, where they met over the forehead, and formed a helmet.

"Observe," said Miss Keenmark, "the tips of the horns must be five feet apart. What a formidable antagonist the animal must be. It is said that even the lion shrinks from open combat with the buffalo."

"And well he may, madam," said Marshall; "I have been out on a buffalo-hunt, down south, where we found the two beasts lying dead together, the horns of the buffalo quite through the grand old lion."

"How do you account, Mr. Marshall," asked she, "for the lacerated and ragged condition of the ears?"

"That's the thorn bushes, madam," answered he; "these brutes force their way through the thickets and their thick skins take no harm, but the ears are often torn."

"We should have had small chance of making a hole in his thick skin," said Charles, "if we had not provided, before we left England, a store of bullets, hardened with tin, especially for his benefit. Marshall warned us yesterday they were near—he had marked

the *spoor* (meaning footsteps, fair ladies) ; we were, therefore, charged in readiness for them. Now for loading and starting. Do you feel fit for work to-day, Hubert, my boy ? for here we have the buffalo-flesh and skins in addition to our usual load."

" Could you not get a young buffalo, and tame it to draw the sledge ?" asked Julia ; " I have read of such things."

" The powerful will of man can accomplish much, fair lady," answered Charles ; " and though the breaking in of a young buffalo might not be the most agreeable task in the world, I will not presume to call it impossible. But even John Scott himself would not, I am persuaded, undertake it in less time than a month."

" Break in a buffalo, Mr. Charles !" exclaimed John ; " nay, nay, you're joking, sir. Many's the vicious colt I've had through my hands, and brought him to his senses, but I'd as lief try to ride a wild boar as yon miraculous creators."

Another long day they travelled over wooded plains, where they often saw at a distance herds of animals which the sportsmen longed to encounter, but were deterred by the responsibility of protecting the females. Evening brought them to the foot of a chain of mountains running north and south, and barring their direct progress east. They were now reluctantly compelled to leave the river, which had its source in a stream rushing down the mountains ; and turning south they proceeded for a mile, when darkness arrested their progress ; and selecting a rocky hollow, they encamped, lighted fires, set a watch, and slept.

CHAPTER X.

The Cocoa Palm. The Mango, The Migration of the Springboks. First sight of the Elephant. Pierre's Adventure. A Lion in the Camp. The wonderful Buffaloes. The Baboon and the Leopard. Tent-making.

MORNING aroused the party to exertion, and a gorge in the mountains soon enabled them to enter a region more thickly wooded than that they had left behind. They continued their course again due east, over plains covered with flowers of extraordinary beauty. The crimson poppy, the purple amaryllis, calceolarias of brilliant hues, and a hundred other flowers unknown to them, delighted the young travellers. Around them grew lofty trees, palms, the silky cotton-tree, magnificent arborescent ferns, and several kinds of figs, on which the monkeys were feasting, and running nimbly up and down, hanging by the elegant creeping-plants which twined round the trees.

"I am most interested about this tree," said Dr. Cameron, pointing to a tall cocoa-palm. "It is the only specimen we have yet met with, and it has always been supposed to be very rare, in a state of nature, south of the equator."

At that moment a mischievous monkey flung down from the tree a very large cocoa-nut; and the party took the hint, and retired to a respectful distance from the citizens of the palm, carrying away the nut, which might have given a heavy blow to any one it had struck.

"It is certainly a gratification to have seen this beautiful tree, the *Cocos nucifera*," said Miss Keenmark. "Observe, my young friends, the slender column which supports the crown of leaves, which fall, like the feathers of the ostrich, with a grace no art can imitate."

"We may probably not see another specimen," said Dr. Cameron,—“at any rate, not in the interior of the country, for this plant loves the coast. The other palms we see seem to be *Hyphæne coriacea*, a smaller tree, with forked stems, which gives it the appearance of being branched.”

"But this tree is certainly not a palm," said Margaret. "I have a great idea that the beautiful odd-shaped oranges that hang from it must be good to eat, for the monkeys are evidently enjoying them."

"I think, Dr. Cameron," said Miss Keenmark, "that I may venture to pronounce this to be the mango—*Mangifera Indica*,—common in most tropical regions, and easily distinguished by the lancet-shaped leaves, and the oval or cucumber-shaped fruit."

"You are quite right, madam," answered he, "and we must have some of the delicious fruit from the monkeys. It will be no great feat for you young sailors to climb the tree and fill a basket for our refreshment."

Climbing a tree was pleasanter than drawing a loaded sledge, and a basket of mangoes was soon placed in the midst of the reclining party, who heartily enjoyed the refreshment.

"Let me be the first, Miss Keenmark," said Edmund, "to offer you a mango; I have removed the thin, delicate, orange-tinted skin, that you may

taste the delicious pulp, which is as good as that of a peach, I can assure you."

Every one declared that nothing could surpass in excellence this cool and melting fruit; but Dr. Cameron said that the mango of Asia excelled all others in size and flavour, the *Mango dodol* of the Indian islands producing fruit of the weight of two pounds.

A large basket of mangoes was placed on the sleigh for evening, as Dr. Cameron assured them this fruit was as rare as the cocoa-nut in South Africa, except on the east coast, where both were cultivated.

When they took their mid-day rest, Dick sawed the cocoa-nut asunder very neatly, and the creamy fruit was pronounced excellent. Norah appropriated the shells as soup-tureens; for they had previously been compelled to fill their cups from the kettle where the soup was made. But at present no soup could be made, for the buffalo-flesh had become tainted, and the dried meat was to be preserved as long as possible.

They encamped—as they usually contrived to do—at the base of a rocky hill; and the next morning the young men proposed that, before they started, a grand chase should be held to provide food for the day. This was agreed upon; but, at Dr. Cameron's suggestion, the encampment was first transferred to the summit of the hill, which, being very steep, would be a protection for the females, in case of another adventure similar to that of the buffaloes.

The hill was difficult of ascent, and the baggage had to be drawn up with ropes; but they found a small table-land on the summit, commanding a wide view. As they turned towards the route they proposed to follow,

they were astonished at the sight of a vast moving mass of animals, proceeding from north to south, immediately below them. The plain was absolutely covered as far as the eye could reach ; and they observed these animals occasionally springing forward in the most extraordinary manner, arching their backs curiously when they made the spring, which was of great length and height, and always alighting on their four feet, ready for the next bound.

"I know what this animal is," cried Edmund, in great delight. "I am quite sure, Miss Keenmark, it must be the *Gazella euchore*, called by the Dutch Boers the springbok, from its surprising leaps. When the rivers of the north fail, these animals migrate in vast numbers to the south, to a land of greater plenty."

"I wish we could go with them, Edmund," said the doctor, "for I don't like to see this symptom of drought. But there go the hunters after them ; they cannot fail of success,—I wish we could be as sure of their moderation."

"We only want one deer," cried Margaret after them,—but they were out of hearing in a moment.

"Truly," said Miss Keenmark, "though the perils of the journey are great, and the privations somewhat grievous, yet would I rejoice to endure still greater trials to be thus rewarded by such wondrous studies of nature. Why, Mrs. Churchill, are these wilds, which teem with plenty, and smile in beauty, solitary and unknown, when the crowded city pines to throw its burthen of excessive population ?"

"I suppose, Miss Keenmark," answered Mrs. Churchill, "because the poor people of cities, like

their richer neighbours, love home, and would rather live on potatoes or oatmeal under a sacred roof, than feast on buffalo-flesh and venison among ravenous animals, and probably savage men. Why do not those foolish young men return ? they have shot their game. What monstrous object is that I see ?”

“It is an elephant !” exclaimed Miss Keenmark,—“a living elephant ! How wonderful are the works of God ! How curious to mark the movements of the mighty creature, as he feeds with all the gentle placidity of an English cow ?”

“And that marvellous trunk, Miss Keenmark,” said Dr. Cameron, “contains no less than 40,000 muscles, which are necessary to give it the elasticity and power it possesses.”

The hunters on the plain below had concealed themselves behind a grove of mimosas to watch the animal ; but Charles, moved by the ambitious desire of slaying an elephant, called to the rest to support him, and fired on the unoffending creature. The ball lodged in its neck ; it instantly rushed forward towards the assailants, tossing its trunk in fury. “Off to the cliff !” cried Albert,—and they all fled ingloriously through the trees, followed rapidly by the beast, absolutely shrieking with pain, while the trees cracked and gave way before his powerful efforts, as if they were but slender twigs.

Already the fleetest were climbing the steep cliff with the agility their huge enemy did not possess. Pierre was the last, and he unfortunately stumbled over a branch, and fell. Before he could rise, the elephant had reached his side. It touched him with its trunk ; then winding it round his body, raised

him, and flung him over its back. Pierre did not lose his senses, and had presence of mind to clutch with both hands the extended arm of a tree of the oak species, which would certainly have ended his days, if his head had struck against it. He remained a moment suspended, then, being light and active, he swung himself up into the tree, and screamed out,—

“Oh, mes amis ! mon cher maître ! come at me ! Will you dat I die ? Kill de cochon ! Il va grimper à l'arbre pour m'engloutir.”

Julia wept and laughed alternately at the unfortunate man's danger, and his fears that the elephant would climb the tree to eat him ; but Mrs. Churchill reproved her levity, for she saw that he was still in jeopardy. The wounded animal watched with a malignant eye his victim in the tree, and with shrill and terrific cries, raised his trunk, reared himself on his hind legs, and dashed his tusks into the tree to root it up. The shrieks of Pierre were now so terrific that even his foe seemed alarmed, and drew back, and the hunters from the side of the hill fired a volley upon him. Many balls entered his body ; but a shot from John broke his hind leg, and he fell heavily. Then the young men descended, and with repeated wounds finished the noble animal, and released Pierre from his perilous elevation.

“Now, gentlemen,” said Mrs. Churchill, “you have done a glorious deed in the sight of God and man. You have destroyed needlessly and wantonly one of the creatures of God, and you have imperilled many lives and wasted much useful ammunition in this grand exploit. I congratulate you.”

“I alone am the offender, Mrs. Churchill,” said

Charles. "I plead guilty, and can assure you I should never have forgiven myself if poor *Pierre le Potron* had been the victim of my rashness. After all, madam, we have killed an elephant, and I shall be proud to present you with a tusk, as a pretty *souvenir* of the event."

But the tusks were adjudged to John, whose shot had been most effectual, and to Pierre, the chief sufferer, on condition that they should carry the prizes, in the distant hope of their proving profitable. In the mean time the vast herd of springboks had passed on, leaving two of their number dead on the field,—a plentiful supply of venison, which Norah grieved to think would be unfit for use two days after.

"Och! Miss Margaret, mavourneen," said she, "isn't it in my mind at this time, and just now I'm saying, the illegant venison pasty, you'll mind it, at your chrustnin', with her own hands, that was Mrs. Miller, the housekeeper at the castle, Miss Julia, didn't she make it, and it was the pride of her heart altogether, and much it was talked of. And now, see here, wouldn't she be the woman to use up all the venison in a pasty to plase ye, if it had been her luck to be shipwrecked among these wild beasts. Heaven save us!"

With some difficulty Margaret convinced the faithful *aide* that to make pasties under the present circumstances would be beyond the magical skill of even the great Soyer, if he had been their *chef*.

For some days they travelled onward, through forests and over hills, meeting with shallow streams, but no rivers. They killed another gemsbok and a few guinea-fowls; but the fatigue of the journey

began to produce its effect—a heavy languor oppressed them, and labour became irksome. Overcome with a long day's travelling over a plain which afforded little shade, they were glad to rest one night under the shelter of a wall of rock ; and building up some chests and trunks on one side, with the sleigh drawn up on the other, they formed a small enclosure, and two fires being lighted in front, felt perfectly secure.

They sat down to eat their supper in the cool air of evening, and having become accustomed to animal food, all were content with their venison-steaks except Mr. Pinchard, who murmured as usual, declaring he should die if he could not have biscuit ; surely there was a bag of biscuit left ; he supposed Captain Stockport would not like to report that one of his passengers had died of hunger.

“ You shall have one biscuit, Mr. Pinchard,” said Margaret, who had the charge of the provision-bags ; “ come with me to the sleigh and open the bag.” Then, springing upon the baggage, the active girl rolled down the bread-bag, which was now not very heavy. While Mr. Pinchard was bending over to open it, to the great horror of Margaret, a large lion rushed past the fires, and seizing the poor man by the arm, was dragging him off, when the intrepid girl, snatching up a pistol that lay on the sleigh, fired it at the side of the retreating animal, which, with a furious roar, dropped its prey, and turned round with flashing eyes. Margaret had shrunk behind a water-cask ; but the young men now ran forward with their loaded pieces, and before the infuriated animal could spring upon the sledge, half a dozen bullets had pierced him, and he fell dead.

For a moment they were stunned and silent ; then, with tears of gratitude, Mrs. Churchill uttered a pious thanksgiving for such a preservation. A deep groan roused them to the recollection of their troublesome and unfortunate companion, and Albert and Charles brought him to the tent. He stared wildly round, and uttered some incoherent words as they uncovered his arm, which was much lacerated by the sharp fangs of the beast. A thick great-coat, which he usually wore as a sleeping-dress, had fortunately been a serviceable defence ; and after Dr. Cameron had dressed the wound, he pronounced that if the patient would be calm, and if no fever came on, he had no doubt it would soon heal.

But the distracted man cried out incessantly that he was dying, and the doctor was compelled to force him to swallow an anodyne to compose him. This accident made it necessary to rest for a day, as it was not safe to remove the suffering and agitated man ; but no one regretted the delay, so weary were they all ; besides, they had a stream of water near, and the men employed themselves in cleaning the lion's skin.

"Come immediately from the river," called Margaret to the men who were washing the skin, "for I see buffaloes coming down to drink, and you must not encounter them."

The men turned towards the enclosure, though Charles looked with longing eyes at the distant objects, and as they drew nearer, seeing there were only three, he felt still more anxious for a shot. Marshall came up as Charles and Albert were discussing the possibility of shooting a buffalo without alarming the ladies. The banks of the little river sloped conve-

niently from the encampment, and it was probable the animals would, as Charles said, pass their very door.

"If they would but separate," continued he, "I could make sure of one. I have my hard bullets here; now, do support me, my good fellow, for I cannot withstand the temptation."

"Stop!" cried Marshall, laying his hand on his arm. "God be praised! these are no buffaloes."

"Why, Marshall, man! do you take them for Mother Carey's chickens?" asked Charles.

"They're birds of better luck," answered he; "for, if ever I set eyes on a span of Cape oxen, *them's them*, I say, Mr. Charles."

When Marshall was excited, his English was far from pure.

"Keep out o' sight, gentlemen," continued he. "Tell the women to hold their tongues: we must come on them cannily."

The news spread, opinions were taken, and, finally, Marshall, John, Albert, and Charles, with lassoes hastily prepared, stole quietly after the three animals, which had now plunged in the stream, and were too much engaged in drinking and laving in the cool water to notice the spies. They were certainly not buffaloes, but the draught oxen of South Africa, with long horns curving upwards, and still wearing some remains of harness.

So intent were the watchers to secure these valuable creatures, that they had no time to speculate on the mystery of their appearance in the desert. Concealed by the overhanging willows, they gradually drew close to the river, and then, each selecting a victim, flung

his lasso. Two of the animals were caught by the horns, and these, plunging and kicking, rushed from the water and endeavoured to extricate themselves from the noose ; but Dr. Cameron and Dick having come up, assisted to secure them, and a few blows with a stout stick soon subdued them. The third bullock had escaped, much to the vexation of Charles, who had attempted to lasso it.

The two captives were tied to a tree, their legs hampered, lest they should do mischief, and then the tattered harness was examined. A rough hide bridle, of which some fragments still remained, had been attached to a wooden plug passed through the cartilage of the nose ; each had the skin of a sheep strapped over its back, above which was a pack-saddle, with iron hooks, on which baggage could be suspended. The saddles were much battered, as if the animals had tried to extricate themselves from them, and the hooks were rusty. The oxen were in good condition, and now the question arose, "How came they there?" None could answer ; but it was the first trace of civilization the party had seen since their landing on the coast, and they hailed it with delight.

"If we only had a waggon !" said Margare :

"It is the fatal error of humanity," said Miss Keenmark, "ever to pine for something unpossessed. Yesterday the gift of these animals, to lighten the toil of our journey, would have been considered a large bounty from Heaven. To-day we have received the gift, and we desire more."

"I am thoughtless and ungrateful, Miss Keenmark," replied Margaret, "and you are very good to reprove me ; believe me, I do fervently thank God for this

means of sparing our good and indefatigable friends. Now Mr. Marshall, Mr. Beaumont, somebody ! do tell me how these domesticated animals became wild."

"I've been considering, miss," answered Marshall ; "and if I guess rightly, they have broken away from some encampment, like enough scared by a lion or leopard, and never stopped till they got to a place where there was pasture and water, and no work. But God alone knows how long sin' that might be ; for I should say from their condition, they've had a rare long holiday. After all, two on 'em will help but little ; for the folks down south never span less than ten or twelve in a waggon."

"But these waggons, you will recollect, Mr. Marshall," said Mrs. Churchill, "are as heavy and clumsy as the caravans of a travelling menagerie. God has sent us those valuable gifts, and they must prove of benefit to us."

The increase of wealth increased, of course, the cares of the possessors. The oxen were brought close to the sleigh, more fires lighted, and a double watch kept, lest the lion or hyena, heard in the woods beyond them, should rob them of their treasure.

For some time the only disturbance was from a troop of hideous baboons, which were seated on a ledge of rocks above them, incessantly uttering their fierce and malicious cry, "Quah ! quah !" By using the long poles which had been cut for the purpose of beating down fruit, all the baboons were put to flight except one huge creature, which boldly leaped down upon the rampart of baggage ; and before the watchful sentinels could chase it off, a large leopard sprung from the rocks above, and fastened on it ; two such

neighbours were not to be tolerated, and the watchmen fired on them effectually, bringing the whole family to the field, roused by the report.

"Draw them safely into the inclosure," cried Edmund, "and to-morrow morning Miss Keenmark and I will have a good look at them."

At the first ray of light, the young people were collected round the two animals so strangely contrasted in appearance.

"How very ugly the creature is," cried Julia, shuddering. "It is quite my *ideal* of the beast, in the fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast."

"It is the *Cynocephalus Mormon*," said Edmund, "a powerful, vindictive, and dangerous animal; much larger than the chimpanzee, which I much wish we could meet with, for it is graceful, active, and easily tamed."

"Then if you've done with this chap, Master Edmund, the sooner we throw him overboard the better," said Marshall.

"I do not object," said Edmund; "I am glad to turn to the leopard. What a graceful and elegant creature he is! How bright is the rich yellow of his skin, contrasted with the deep rose-coloured annular spots that mark it!"

"We say him be tiger, down sout',—him bery bad crittur," said Abdalla.

"That's true," said Marshall; "I've heard him called tiger at the Cape."

"Nevertheless," observed Miss Keenmark, "this is the real leopard, *Felis leopardus*, differing in its slender structure, as much as in its peculiarly-marked skin,

from the tiger, *Felis tigris*, which is an exclusively Asiatic animal."

By the time the leopard was skinned, and the lecture concluded, the report of Mr. Pinchard's health was called for, and Dr. Cameron found that he had so much fever that it would be dangerous to remove him ; they were therefore detained another day.

Though the party had gradually fallen into the friendly familiarity of republicanism, Captain Stockport never forgot his responsible position ; he demanded respect, and he never entreated, but ordered. To him now Marshall respectfully addressed himself, saying, "Would you please, captain, to issue orders for rigging up a tent again the storms come on ; for I reckon we must have weather before long, and them skins, if stitched up handy, would turn a good drop of wet."

"It is well thought on, Mr. Marshall," answered he ; "set the hands on to the job this idle day."

Marshall issued the orders of the commander in a general way,—summoning all to work who could or would work. The skins were spread and shaped properly ; some were employed in cutting up the waste pieces into threads or thongs ; awls were procured from the carpenter's chest, and the work of sewing began with much laughter and many blunders. No one refused to take a part in the labour, and having a good supply of skins, they completed before night the cover for a large tent, which was carefully rolled up and placed on the sleigh.

CHAPTER XI.

The span of Oxen. The herd of Giraffes. The Lion and his prey. The Nest of the Ostrich. The night in the Cave. Margaret's Fountain. The Thunder-storm. The Manufacture of Bows and Arrows. Once more on the road. The Animals of the Wilderness.

NEXT morning Mr. Pinchard's wound was progressing so favourably, that Dr. Cameron thought he might safely travel on his mattress placed on the sleigh, and they immediately prepared to span the oxen. To their surprise and satisfaction the third bullock was found quietly grazing with its companions, having joined them during the night. It was easily secured, and Marshall and Abdalla, who had seen the process, harnessed two of the animals to a wooden pole which Dick had attached to the sleigh, the third being placed in front as leader. The waggoners had made for themselves whips of knotted thongs, and by merely cracking them, the animals were induced to move briskly on. The sleigh now progressed very satisfactorily to all but Dick, who declared that he would like to try at wheels, "if captain pleases."

But "Captain" shook his head, and said, "There is one thing I please to order, and, gentlemen, I must beg you all to attend to it. I must positively forbid the consumption of ammunition in useless sport. I have, with Mr. Marshall, inspected the magazine, and am concerned to find it so greatly diminished. We may have more formidable enemies to encounter than

baboons or wild cats, and I cannot sanction wanton waste."

There was a momentary silence, followed by a low rebellious murmur from the young sportsmen ; but Mrs. Churchill seconded the motion of the captain, and Miss Keenmark said, " We must not presume to expect that we shall escape all the wild tribes of the interior. Some are reported by travellers to be mild and inoffensive ; others are rumoured to be ferocious cannibals ; but we know that all are equally ignorant, and however disproportionate in number to our slender force, may be awed by the fatal effects of fire-arms."

" God spare us from the struggle," said Mrs. Churchill ; " but it would be worse than folly to exhaust our means of defence. We have fruits, and guinea-fowls' eggs, and must learn to live abstemiously."

Crossing another ridge of hills, the travellers came upon a wide plain dotted over with trees, chiefly acacias, on the very topmost branches of which a herd of wondrous animals were browsing with perfect ease, forming a picture that struck all the gazers with delight.

" There can be no mistake here," said Edmund. " These are the creatures I have longed to see. No other animal is like the giraffe."

" Yet you know, Edmund," observed Miss Keenmark, " that the old naturalists named it *Camelopardalis*, from its resemblance to the camel in form, and the leopard in skin. I confess that I do not think the name appropriate."

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The attack of the Lion on the Giraffe.



feed on an acacia which stood in the centre of a low thicket, and Charles, Albert, and Hubert approached the spot, concealed by the bushes, to observe the creature more closely.

"I must have a shot," said Hubert. "Why are we to be treated like a party of schoolboys? The old captain is as despotic as the Czar!"

"And we must obey him, Hubert," said Albert. "No party can safely hold together without a head; and we cannot have a more fitting commander than the oldest and most experienced among us."

But Hubert was stubborn, and would certainly have tried his skill, had not a rustling in the thicket caused them all to make a quick retreat; and glancing back, they saw a lion spring upon the neck of the giraffe, which bounded off in terror for some yards, with its murderous foe clinging to its back, but soon tottered and sunk a victim to the sharp fangs of the lion. The rest of the herd had scampered off at the first alarm, leaving the destroyer and his spoil: and the young men gladly sought the security of numbers, Hubert sighing, as he said, "What disappointment! Now I may return to Europe without having another opportunity of killing a giraffe."

And however tempting the giraffe might be, the general desire was to remove speedily from the neighbourhood of the lion; besides, there was no appearance of water on the plains before them, and they hastened their progress, hoping to reach a stream before they encamped for the night. But as they proceeded, they were startled at the increasing desolation of the scene, —no water, no trees; the very grass looked dry and withered; and the only animals seen were those which

can subsist almost entirely without water,—the giraffe, the gemsbok, and the ostrich.

The women, overcome by the heat, were compelled to mount on the sleigh, and the heavy-laden oxen had sometimes the additional burthen of a wearied boy ; yet the poor animals plodded on tame enough now, and the whole party were spiritless.

“Do stop a moment,” said Edmund. “See, Mr. Beaumont, the male ostrich keeping watch by yon hillock of sand ; there ought to be a nest near.”

“No shooting, young gentlemen,” said Captain Stockport. “An ostrich is not worth powder and shot.”

Hubert groaned, and Maude murmured something about “the plumes ;” but the commander was inexorable ; and the young men contented themselves with going to look for the nest.

“They are boys, Mrs. Churchill,—quite boys,” said the old disciplinarian ; “forgetting everything in the pleasure of bird-nesting.”

“But you must allow, sir,” said Julia, laughing, “that it is bird-nesting on a grand scale.”

As they were not allowed to use a gun, the youths had procured from the ladies some coloured shawls, which they suspended to the ends of long poles, then drawing near the watchful bird, they suddenly rushed forward, with loud cries, waving the flags, and succeeded in putting it to flight. The mate started from the nest in alarm, and both the birds fled with speed over the plain. The nest contained twenty or thirty eggs, and the shawls were, without ceremony, employed to carry off the valuable spoil, and they returned in improved spirits, talking of omelettes, and as it

was now noonday, they spread their tents to escape from the sun on that shelterless waste ; and gathering some dry grass, made a fire to cook an omelette,—an indifferent substitute for the water they all loughed for.

They did not resume their journey till the heat was somewhat abated, and then the poor oxen moved slowly, their parched tongues hanging down in a piteous manner. The sun descended ; however Captain Stockport said, "Move on ; the moon and stars will light our way. We are safer in motion than at rest without the protection of fires, for I hear the lions from some distant haunt."

The moonlight procession was melancholy. Miss Keenmark attempted a lecture on the beautiful constellations of the southern heavens ; but her dry tongue would not permit her to proceed. Fatigue, care, and apprehension kept all silent. Even the voluble Angelina, after a little attempt to enter into a flirtation with Dick, who was walking by the side of the sleigh, armed with hammer and nails, was compelled to desist when she found that his only thought was to watch the motion of his rude vehicle and to repair damages, or as his friend Norah said, "to take up stithes."

It was past midnight when they reached a lofty ridge of bare rocks, and pining for rest, were glad to hear the word given. A deep cavern was found in the rocks, and a torch of dried grass enabled them to discover that it was untenanted by wild animals, and was spacious enough to contain the party, even if it had consisted of ten times the number. Even the oxen were admitted ; a niche, barricaded with chests, being appropriated to them. The kind-hearted girls

would not rest till they had collected some baskets of dry grass for the poor beasts. The sleigh was drawn across the opening, and they trusted they were thus secured from the savage hyena, the wild dogs, and other ferocious beasts, the howls of which were now plainly heard. Then, supping in the dark on uncooked ostrich's eggs, they offered up their prayers, and wrapping themselves in their cloaks, slept on the ground as soundly as if on down beds.

When the first ray of light peeped over the barricade, all were ready. A thanksgiving to God for the peace of the night, and a prayer for continued protection, nerved them for the toils of another day.

"Dr. Cameron," said Margaret, "you will listen to me without laughing; no one will believe me when I declare that I verily did hear, all night—for even when I slept I heard it in my dreams—a sound of water dropping like rain; yet you see no rain has fallen."

"Margaret fancies herself such a clever woman," said Hubert, "since Norah has taught her to cook chops and steaks, that she is always making some grand discovery."

"Take no notice of that boy's impertinence, Margaret," said Dr. Cameron. "We will search for your magic well."

Accordingly, the niche which had formed Margaret's dormitory was explored; there were certainly no signs of water there, but as she persisted in her belief, Marshall and Dick climbed the rock where it was lowest, and passed along a shelving ledge to the part over the cave. Here they discovered, to their great delight, a basin, evidently hollowed out by the action of the

water which was dropping slowly into it from some reservoir far above in the mountain ; probably some lake formed by the rains, so deep that the water had not yet evaporated. A loud shout from the explorers proclaimed the good news to the party below, and every vessel they possessed was soon drawn up to be filled with the clear and delicious water ; they then ate their dried meat with a good appetite, and even Maude Seyton enjoyed a cup of cold water more than she had ever enjoyed her morning cup of chocolate in the days of luxury. The poor oxen were not forgotten, but were regaled with several pails of water before they were satisfied.

" How pleasant it would be to live in this cave," said Julia ; " to have a cool saloon, abundance of water, no fear of lions, and no more walking up and down hills."

" Do not talk nonsense ; and pray mend that large rent in your dress, Julia," said her mother.

" It is possible, Julia," said Albert, " that circumstances may oblige us to fall back on such a snug retreat. I think we should have no difficulty in finding our hospitable shelter again ; and before we now leave it, I propose, always with Captain Stockport's sanction, that we should name the dropping well ' Margaret's Fountain.' "

The proposal was graciously approved, and " Margaret's Fountain " was hailed with cheers, as they now cheerfully set about resuming their journey over a plain which, by daylight, appeared less barren than those they had previously crossed. The ground was covered with a scanty pasture, and several low thickets of mimosas were seen. Much time had been occupied by " watering the ship," as Captain Stockport termed

it, and before they set out the sun had risen lurid and red, the air was sultry and oppressive, and a stillness more perceptible than usual even in that solitary desert reigned around. Before they had proceeded half a mile, the thunder pealed forth, and the lightning gleamed terrifically. All were alarmed. Angeline screamed at every flash, and Mr. Pinchard groaned and hid his head beneath his cloak, while Captain Stockport and Marshall held a short private consultation, followed by an order from the captain,—“ We must turn about, and make for the snug port we left this morning.”

Vexatious as it was to retrace their steps, the need was urgent, and it was with true satisfaction that some of the party saw the mouth of the cave again. As they came along, Dick and John cut a quantity of dry mimosa branches, which were piled on the sleigh, and from thence transferred to the cave for firewood.

By the time they reached this shelter, the dark and threatening sky denoted a tempest at hand, the long-desired rain-drops began to fall, and the thirsty oxen, holding out their dry tongues, bellowed their gratitude. They were then tethered with ropes long enough to allow them to crop such herbage as the ground afforded, and the captain “ piped all hands ” to unload the sleigh of all things that might suffer from the rain, which now fell with increasing violence, though the parched ground absorbed it so speedily that no traces were left after it fell.

“ Now, mamma,” said Julia, “ you see I did not talk nonsense. We are glad to return to our marble hall. Pray, Mr. Marshall, how long will this rain last? I know you are very learned about storms.”

"Not so learned as you think, miss," answered he. "This may, or it may not, be the beginning of the reg'lar rains that come down for weeks together, twice of a year."

"I say *not*, Marshall," said the captain. "I say this is a mere thunderstorm that will pass away. To-morrow we may leave port."

"But the rains cannot be far off, captain, and this is a snug harbour," Marshall ventured to say.

The authority of Captain Stockport in maritime affairs was indisputable, but there was a strong inclination among the party to trust Marshall on land. However they had committed themselves to a despotic ruler, and must obey him; therefore temporary accommodations were made by spreading mattresses, a cooking-fire was made in a distant recess, and a solitary guinea-fowl, in terror of the storm, having been knocked down by Charles, was added to the stew of dried buffalo-meat, forming a good dinner for the hungry guests. A little salt was still left to flavour the stews, and all were content but Mr. Pinchard, who said,—
"We might have had some excellent dishes if I had only been lucky enough to bring my bottle of curry-powder from the ship. And now those savage Yankees, who don't care whether their meat be cooked or raw, will throw it overboard."

"Not they," said Marshall; "Jonathan never throws away anything that can be turned into money. Your fiery powder has gone to market again, Mr. Pinchard."

"And it's little good you'd have got on it here, sir," said Norah. "It's just the stew, and the birds, and the steaks as shutes me. I wouldn't be understanding them pisons."

"Curry-powder is not poison, Norah," said Mrs. Churchill; "but we must be satisfied with the meat that God sends us, and pray that it may not fail. May I ask, Hubert, what is your design in twisting that bamboo rod so roughly?"

"The truth is, madam," answered he, "that concluding I should be 'piped out for punishment,' if I broke the laws, I am trying to bend them to my purpose."

Hubert was surrounded by a small party, to whom he was delivering a scientific lecture on the proper mode of making bows and arrows, illustrating it by bending one of the bamboo wands which had been cut on the banks of a stream, to be useful in making harness. While Hubert lectured, Marshall and Dick were employed in another part of the cave in actually forming a bow, which they accomplished tolerably well, and strung it with thongs of hide. Hubert was astonished and mortified at the triumph of practice over theory, and examined the bow with supercilious contempt, pointing out its defects in material and workmanship.

"Set to work, Hubert, and produce a perfect bow," said his aunt, "before you ridicule the labours of others."

"Pardon me, aunt," said he; "I am no practical mechanic, but I conceive my acquired knowledge may be of use to point out the true mode of forming the noble weapon."

"How should dear Hubert ever have learnt such vulgar arts," said Maude; "but if he had a bow, I can assure you he could use it well and gracefully. Both he and I won prizes at Lady Fenton's archery meeting last season."

"I rejoice to hear such good news, Miss Seyton," said Dr. Cameron ; "we now need never want game for the pot. I propose, Marshall, that you should make a light bow for this young lady ; who knows but she may bring us down a parrot !—or perhaps a monkey, which I can tell you is no bad eating."

Maude was not unwilling to exhibit her skill, and everybody set to work to make bows or arrows, or to cut and twist bowstrings ; and thus the pouring rain was unheeded. The arrows were pointed with the bones and feathered with the quills of the guinea-fowls which had fortunately been preserved. The work went on merrily,—the lofty cavern echoed with songs and cheerful laughter,—and before night came on, several bows and a large stock of arrows were completed. The rain continued unabated,—the oxen, much refreshed by rest and food, were brought into the cave and tied up,—the tents were put up, and a formidable barrier was raised before the entrance with the sleigh and mimosa-bushes ; after which, in spite of the tempest and the howls of wild beasts, they slept in security.

"Captain Stockport," said Miss Keenmark, when they met next morning, "I confess that I am somewhat infected with the romance of my young pupils. After our perilous and erratic journey, it is pleasant to find a peaceful home, even though it be in a cave. God has given us abundance of water, and spread before us pasture for our cattle. The young and ardent might hunt for food,—the old and thoughtful might meditate on the wondrous works of God on earth, to fit them to appreciate and strive after the glories of a higher existence. Captain Stockport, life

is a troubled sea ; ought we to forsake the harbour into which the hand of God has brought us ? ”

“ I have sailed in many a troubled sea, madam,” answered he, “ and by God’s mercy have been brought in safety into many a harbour ; but I never thought it my duty to lay up there, while He gave me strength to work, and work to do. When the fair wind came I weighed anchor, and sailed out of port, as, God helping me, I will do now. Did God make you, and me, and these active young creatures, and Mr. Marshall—as good a mate as ever stepped a deck—to drone out life in a wilderness, a hundred miles at least from the wide ocean, with no work on hand, the sails flapping, and not a man at the helm ? ”

“ I am of your spirit, Captain Stockport,” said Mrs. Churchill : “ I have a great stake in the venture ; but, in God’s name, let us struggle onwards, when He permits His sun to shine upon us again.”

Marshall called aside Albert, for a common possession of good sense had made them friends, in spite of the difference in education : “ Mr. Beaumont,” said he, “ just hear me : our captain is at home on the water, but he knows little of these land-storms. This is the month for them ; we may make way for a day or two, till we have lost our bearings of this safe port,—and then down come the real rains, like nothing else in the world but the flood in the Bible, and we out of the ark ; and, then, look at yon poor women. Do you think, sir, we could get Captain Stockport to lay by a week or so for a fair wind ? ”

But the captain would not be persuaded. However the rain prevented any turning out at present ; the sportsmen alone ventured, in Macintosh dresses,

to try their bows, and, after losing many arrows, were fortunate enough to bring home a springbok and a few braces of guinea-fowls. The cooks were busied in preparing the meat, and the girls made a calico bag, and filled it with the feathers, to form a cushion for the sleigh. Towards evening the rain ceased, and then the word was given for all to be ready next morning.

"Hubert," said Julia, "let us mutiny. Why should we leave this charming cave?"

But Hubert was a soldier, and scorned to mutiny,—he only murmured; Norah and Abdalla murmured, as they roasted and boiled all the meat to carry away; and even John and Dick murmured at the hasty proceedings, as they filled the water-casks and bottles at the fountain. Yet no one rebelled, and the morning being fair and clear, they set out, cheered by the improved face of nature: the grass looked greener, the trees fresher, and the parrots chattered with more volubility than common.

"Confess, now, Maude Seyton," said Miss Keenmark, "that this glorious blue sky and green earth, with all God's creatures rejoicing at the revival of nature, have a charm beyond the artificial glare of the crowded ball-room,—the abode of idle fashion and dangerous luxury."

"I think the blue sky, and the wet grass, and the noisy parrots all equally disagreeable," answered the young lady. "I think there can be no enjoyment in the world without society."

"And, pray, Maude Seyton, are we not considered society?" asked Mrs. Churchill. "Believe me, that it was not in the gay circles, to which you were admitted when you ought to have been in the nursery or the

schoolroom, that you would meet with such friends and teachers as now surround you ; and if, by God's blessing, we ever reach home, you will look back on these trials of life with thankfulness."

Maude had too much respect for her aunt to reply ; she returned to the sleigh and the consolations of her maid Angeline ; while the rest tried their skill with the bows,—the ladies with signal failure, but the gentlemen obtained two brace of Namaqua partridges, most excellent food.

"Pray, make more cushions of the feathers, Margaret," said Maude, "for my arms are quite bruised with the jolting since these awkward animals have drawn the sleigh."

"Oh ! I dare say we were gentler in harness, Miss Seyton," said Charles, laughing ; "but I would rather shoot birds for feathers to make cushions than submit to the yoke again."

Two days more travelling had nearly exhausted the water brought from Margaret's fountain, of which the oxen had necessarily a considerable share. Still no river or well was seen ; the vegetation became more scanty,—the heat more intolerable. A thin grass covered the wide unbroken plain, where occasionally might be seen a pair of ostriches, or the noble gemsbok, both independent of water. More rarely, two animals, nearly resembling each other,—the quagga and the striped rehra, were seen, and greatly the sportsmen desired to have a shot at them ; but Captain Absolute, as Julia named him, insisted on discretion ; and they submitted to orders, and rambled forward, looking anxiously round for a green spot that might betoken water.

CHAPTER XII.

The Karroo. The Dry River. Expedition in search of Water.
The happy Discovery and the Buffalo-steaks. The arrival of
the Rains. Famine in Prospect. A Sporting Expedition.
The stranded Waggon in the Karroo.

ANOTHER day, and the dismal karroo spread before the alarmed travellers,—a wide and pathless desert. The scanty grass was black and crisp with drought ; here the thunder-rains had certainly never fallen,—it was a drought of months. Not a tree or shrub could be discerned,—the burning rays of the sun were reflected from the arid and stony plain, and intolerable weariness of mind and body seized on all. Still the firm spirit of their leader governed and sustained them, and for two days more they moved slowly along. Then the food failed ; but the seasonable discovery of the nest of an ostrich supplied them with some eggs the second night. On these they supped, eating them uncooked, and giving a part to the famishing cattle, which lay down on the bare earth as if they never could rise again. It was a night of watchfulness and woe ; too weak to raise the tents, and without materials for a fire, they rested, but could not sleep.

The morning light, and earnest prayer, awoke hope again. They dragged on for a few miles, and then fancied that they saw at a distance some appearance of vegetation. Leaving the sleigh to follow slowly, Albert and Charles advanced as briskly as their weakened frames would permit,—first a low thorny

bush, then a scanty appearance of long grass, then a taller acacia, gave signs of a moister soil. At length they reached a precipitous descent clothed with reeds, and saw below them the deep bed of a river, now dry and covered with large stones mingled with rushes; the dark cliffs which rose on each side denoting that after the periodical rains a deep river flowed here.

It was melancholy to report to the anxious party now arriving, the heavy disappointment; but, inured to trial, they bore it well, and finding a sloping part of the banks, they descended into the bed of the river, the cliffs affording some shelter from the sun, and the air, they fancied, being fresher and cooler on the spot where water had been.

Here, then, they rested; food they had none, and the panting oxen refused to touch the grass they had been so long deprived of. Edmund, who had lingered behind, now called Dr. Cameron to point out to him some narrow black-dotted leaves springing from the dry soil; the doctor confirmed the boy's opinion that this must be the water-root of the karroo, and producing his knife, dug a few inches below the soil, and drew out a bulb about eight inches in diameter, covered with a brown skin like that of the potato: with some trouble they found another bulb, and conveyed them to the party below the cliff. The skin was easily removed, and the juicy bulb, though rather tasteless, afforded some refreshment and nutriment to the weakest of the sufferers. In the mean time, Marshall, who alone could influence his master, conversed with him a few moments; then the captain said,—

“Marshall understands something of these strange

rivers. He tells me they sometimes sink below the sand in the lower part of their course, during the dry season, but that pools are often left towards the head. Will any of you young men, who are not quite done up, volunteer on the forlorn hope?"

Albert and Charles first held up their hands, followed by Marshall and Dick, who were still tolerably stout; then John vowed his young master should not die without him, and joined the party. Each was armed with a knife; Charles and Albert carried, with difficulty, their guns; the rest had buckets, bowls, and bottles, to be filled if they should happily be successful. Thus provided, they proceeded slowly up the bed of the river, leaving the rest to watch in silent anxiety for their return.

After they had gone about a mile without success, they sat down exhausted and discouraged; here Albert observed that the rushes looked greener and fresher than those they had passed, which revived their hopes, and they went on. A little way farther they saw, above the high bank, some mimosa-bushes and stunted willows; at length alternate little banks of sand showed the action of the water, and a few yards further moisture appeared between the ridges; then long shallow lines of water, which a little higher became pools. The pride of manhood was forgotten, and they wept as they lifted up their voices and hearts in thankfulness to God.

Then Albert and Marshall assumed authority: they ordered, or prevailed on, their companions to pour the water over their heated heads, and wash their dried and crusted mouths, before they swallowed any. How delicious and refreshing was that draught, and how

much they wished for their suffering friends to share their pleasure. They continued to advance for fifty yards, and then found water and trees more abundant; and as Albert and Charles were the most enfeebled of the party, Marshall proposed that they should remain in possession of the spot, while the rest, with well-filled buckets, returned to convey the good news, and bring up the remainder of the travellers.

"Now," said Charles, "we must explore the country, and select a pleasant situation for the encampment. I see there is an easy ascent of the banks a little higher."

"Which doubtless the lions have tracked," answered Albert; "therefore we must be prepared."

It was well their double-barrelled rifles were charged, for at that moment a snort was heard, and a huge buffalo descended the sloping bank, and plunged with great enjoyment into the mud. His side offered a good mark, and they fired together, and then sprang up the rocky bank. The animal, furious with pain, roared tremendously, and rushed towards his assailants, who, fortunately above his reach, were able to give him the contents of the second barrels, and the huge beast tottered and fell dead.

"We must never confess to the old commander," said Charles, "that we have expended four charges on our game. But how do you feel, Albert? my mouth waters to taste his flesh; do gather up some dry twigs, my good fellow, and raise a blaze, while I try to cut a steak to broil, for I can wait no longer."

They had been so long without hilarity, that they felt the benefit of the laughter their rude contrivances caused them. Albert made a fire in a niche of the

rocks higher up the river than the buffalo-track ; but they took care to charge their guns for fear of a surprise. They fixed a forked stick on each side of the fire, spitted the meat on a ramrod, which they rested on the forks, allowed their steaks to broil as long as their famine would allow them to wait, dished them up in an ostrich-shell bowl, used for drawing water, and then ate them with such appetite as those only can conceive who have felt such hunger.

In the mean time the distress of the anxious watchers was much increased by the indisposition of Maude Seyton. At no time strong, she had become daily weaker from rejecting with disgust the animal food which the rest were glad, so long as it could be procured, to subsist on, and now began to sink under the attack of a low fever. Dr. Cameron watched tenderly over the almost unconscious girl, but could afford her little assistance, for the cooling draughts so necessary for her he could not procure for want of water. Some tea and sugar still remained ; but water was needed to make them available. It was in vain that powdered sugar was placed on her parched tongue ; there was not moisture to dissolve it. Angeline wept and lamented over her beloved charge ; but it was Margaret that shaded her couch with a shawl, and fanned her burning cheeks.

As they stood round the sick girl in silent grief, the oxen, which it had not been thought necessary to secure, and which had been lying half inanimate above the banks, suddenly rose and set out briskly up the river side. This seemed the last drop in the cup of misery, for no one had strength to pursue them, when Edmund observed, — " Perhaps they scent water ;

I have heard they can do so at a great distance." There was something cheering in this suggestion, and it was remembered also that the exploring party might meet and recover the cattle. In fact, the water-bearers encountered them a few hundred yards from the encampment, and such was the maddening desire of the animals to reach the water they had scented, that they would have rolled over the steep banks, if John, to prevent the risk of losing their valuable spoil, had not climbed the banks, drawn up a bucket, and then, by using a cocoa-nut bowl, succeeded in dividing the water, without waste, amongst the thirsty creatures ; and they readily followed him back to the encampment, tempted by the sight of the water-bucket.

By this time Marshall and Dick had consigned their trust to the prudent care of Dr. Cameron, who cautiously satisfied the eager sufferers. The mouth of the sick girl was first moistened with *eau sucrée*, and her burning brow cooled with wetted cloths till she revived a little, and was able to swallow the saline mixture made by the kind doctor. When the dry tongues were loosed, there were questions and answers, followed by hasty preparations for removing to a region of comparative plenty.

The oxen were gratified with all the water left in the buckets ; they were grazing on the dry grass with some relish, when they were summoned to the yoke, and drew the sleigh with more spirit than they had shown for some days. The sight of an ostrich, which fled as they approached, tempted Edmund to stray to the spot it had left, in hopes of meeting with a nest, and to his surprise he found a large shallow basin, or

dry lake, the bottom of which was covered with large crystals of salt. This was too valuable a prize to be neglected, and calling for aid, a large basket was filled with salt, to the great pleasure of all, for their supply of salt had failed two days before. As the sleigh drew near the bivouac of the two friends, the grateful odour of the broiled steaks greeted the travellers, and all hastened to quit the sleigh to discover the source of this pleasant promise. The smoke of the cooking-fire was a guide to the spot, and at the sound of their approach, Albert and Charles advanced laughing to meet them, each bearing a bowl of smoking steaks. Very little preparation was made before the tough meat was attacked, and long abstinence had made them so ravenous that it soon vanished. Then some tea was made for the invalid, the buffalo was skinned and cut up, and a large piece suspended to roast for future consumption.

The place Albert had selected for the encampment was about fifty yards from the river, and at some distance above the buffalo-haunt. It was near two thick mimosa-bushes, which had been carefully examined and found to contain neither beast nor reptile; and the water being there more abundant and easier of access than below, the selection seemed to give satisfaction, and the tents were raised and gladly taken possession of, for the day was more than usually sultry, and seemed to threaten another storm.

Captain Stockport, pleased with the advantage of the watering-place, agreed to remain here till next morning, but not longer.

"In that matter, my good friend," said Dr. Cameron, "I shall venture to have a voice. If my little patient

does not soon recover strength, it would be death to move her ; and it will be difficult to bring her round, for we have no diet to suit her."

But under Mrs. Churchill's directions, a little good broth, flavoured with salt, had been made, and while Margaret was feeding the patient with this nourishing support, Mrs. Churchill, recalling all the small household knowledge of her youth, summoned her allies, and after getting one of the huge feet of the buffalo completely skinned, Dick with his axe struck off the hoof, and divided the bones ; these were placed in a large kettle of water, and boiled down to jelly, which was to stand till it was cold, and after the fat was removed, to be sweetened with sugar for the invalid next day. The young men, in the mean time, had placed the chests and casks so as to form a sort of protection round the tents, and some dry wood being collected, fires were made, and the earnest devotions of the evening concluded a day of special mercies.

But before morning they were awaked with loud peals of thunder, vivid lightning, and the bellowing of the terrified oxen, succeeded after some time by floods of rain. The English tent was waterproof, but the heavy rain beat upon it till it tottered. There could be no sleep ; they watched the lightning till morning broke, when it ceased ; but the rain continued to fall in such torrents that it flowed into the tents. The packages were all brought under cover, and skins were spread upon the damp earth ; even the skin of the buffalo they had killed the previous day, was now raised on some spare poles to form a sort of porch before the tents ; but with all their labour the discomfort was great ; no firewood could now be got, and

they were grateful for the meat roasted the day before. Maude was already better, and ate her jelly with good appetite ; her illness was no longer motive for delay, but to travel was now impossible.

Captain Stockport was stern and gloomy ; he avoided Marshall for some time, then suddenly walking up to him, as he stood looking out beneath the porch, he said, " Mr. Marshall, you were right, and I was wrong ; we ought to have come to an anchor in that den ; but the truth is, I never could rightly understand these unnatural land storms. Well, sir ? "

" Well, Captain Stockport," answered the mate, " we are in for it, sir. As sure as ever you are captain of the good ship *Madras*, wherever she may be, this here rain will hold for a month. Thank God for water, and meat we may pick up now and then ; but God help these poor women folk, they'll be half drowned."

" I was an obstinate old fool, Marshall—I see I was," continued the captain, walking to and fro. " We must get some of the wisest heads together and hold a council. There's Mr. Beaumont and young Staunton ; I won't have that forward boy-soldier. Then Mrs. Churchill is a sensible woman, and the governess has a head ; call them into my cabin."

So a cabinet council was held in the tent of the captain, from which the young were excluded. No words were wasted in idle regrets ; they looked firmly at the future, and sought to make the best of their disaster. To travel in the rains was pronounced impossible. They had two large skin tents, besides the smaller English tent. These would serve for sleeping

apartments ; but to live continually in them would be terrible confinement.

“ If we could procure more skins,” said Albert, “ as we have poles, we might erect an awning before the three tents, underneath which we might sit or walk.”

“ There are plenty of huge stones close at hand in the bed of the river,” said Charles ; “ and though we cannot build a house with them, we might form a wall round the tents to protect us from the wild beasts.”

This plan was unanimously approved ; the sleigh was completely unloaded, the oxen harnessed, and all able hands called to work. Arrayed in water-proof blouses or in skin cloaks, they worked in the bed of the river, and brought away a great quantity of large stones or pieces of rock ; and before the day was over, in spite of the rain, they had formed a secure fence, of tolerable extent, round the tents, and in one corner covered in a place for a cooking fire. Dick had cut down a good supply of bushes for firewood, which was placed under cover to dry, and the females had arranged the tents with some attempt at comfort. The floors were covered with skins, the chests and packages formed tables and seats, and the mattresses were piled up on one side till wanted. Still the space left was small for the residence of seven persons in the ladies' tent, each of the other tents containing six inhabitants. The oxen were brought within the inclosure at night, when, secure from the lion and hyena, the fatigued party were able to enjoy their rest.

Morning revealed the same dismal prospect ; the rain fell incessantly ; the females busied themselves in domestic duties—linen was washed, dresses repaired, the cooking fire was lighted, and buffalo meat was

stewed, boiled, and roasted, for future provision, and thus profitable employment was found for another day; but to the active young men the confinement was irksome and distressing.

Day after day passed, the rain continued, and the meat which remained had become tainted and uneatable. It was absolutely necessary that they should procure food; and yet it was almost hopeless to set out in search of it through the blinding rain. Mr. Pinchard was the first to complain of short allowance; he was afraid to speak to Mrs. Churchill or Captain Stockport, but to Miss Keenmark he said, "Don't you think, madam, that Captain Stockport should really order one of those lazy fat beasts to be killed? It would be a great comfort to have a bit of genuine beef instead of that hard, indigestible buffalo flesh which we have been compelled to live on. I can assure you, Miss Keenmark, that it disagrees very much with my stomach."

"Still, Mr. Pinchard," answered the lady, "we should be grateful for the bountiful supply of food sent to us in the hour of need, and supplicate Heaven to renew the blessing. Your suggestion of slaying the useful animals by whose exertions our very lives have been saved, would, I pronounce with confidence, be certainly rejected. No one here could sanction such a deed of cruelty."

"I didn't think of that, I'm sure, madam," said he. "Then I should say that those gentlemen that took care to bring their macintoshes from the ship should go out and shoot something, if it was only a pair of those clacking guinea-fowls."

"Come, Pinchard," cried Charles, "I'll lend you a

macintosh, and you shall have a day's shooting, my good fellow."

"Thank you, Mr. Staunton," answered he, "but I was no great shot at any time; and since I was worried by that lion, I've never recovered the right use of my arm. Besides, I always get cold when I'm out in the rain."

"Then, Albert," said Charles, laughing, "there's nothing for it but you and I making a sally to try and provide food for Mr. Pinchard."

"What if I went with you, Charles," said Hubert; "there are not many better shots at a bird on the wing than I am."

"But as it is not very probable that we shall find birds on the wing this weather," answered Charles, "I think you had better stay under shelter, my dear lad, and read a little with Miss Keenmark,"

"Come along, sir," cried Julia; "you know you are the head of the Arabic class. There are not many better linguists than Lieutenant Hubert Seyton."

Hubert did not like to be laughed at; but nothing better offering, he joined the young students, to amaze them with his learning. Captain Stockport looked uneasily at the preparations of the young sportsmen; but remembering his late blunder, he refrained from further interference, and the two friends set out. They went on through the pelting rain for at least two miles, keeping the river in sight as a guide, but still no sign of animal life greeted them. They were mortified and dejected, unwilling to return without relief to their distressed friends, and looking round in vain for game. At length they fancied they saw a dark object at some distance before them, and, animated by hope,

were walking briskly towards it, when they were electrified by the report of a gun. It was certain that the sound did not proceed from the encampment, but from before them. "For good or evil, we must march onward," cried Albert; and forward they went at good speed, looking carefully at their rifles, shrouded beneath their blouses.

"Ought we not to fire a signal?" asked Charles, as they proceeded.

"I think not," replied Albert; "some of the savage tribes have fire-arms; and it would be desirable to reconnoitre before we present ourselves."

But when they drew near the dark object they had observed, they saw with amazement it was an immense covered waggon; a *civilized* waggon, Charles said, which must be saluted. Before they had fired, however, they saw a man approaching the waggon from the opposite direction, carrying an antelope on his back. Charles hallooed loudly, and the stranger, flinging down his load, was raising his gun, when Albert, waving his handkerchief, cried out, "We are friends!" speaking in English as a first experiment.

The experiment was successful; the stranger sprang forward to meet them, threw down his gun, shook hands repeatedly with each, and finally danced round them, crying, "Thank God! I shall get the use of my tongue again. But what in the world are you about here, gentlemen, on this detestable karroo, and in such dismal weather?"

"We might ask you the same question," replied Albert, "but conclude that, like ourselves, you are not here from choice."

"Ah! I see; you have also been duped by those

Hottentot dogs. Well, such is the charming experience of life ; but we are now at home, so step into my mansion, and I will give you a cup of tea."

Nothing loth, the friends stepped through an open door in the front of the huge vehicle, and the host, after hanging his game on a hook outside the arched roof of the vehicle, followed them, saying, " Now, off with your caps and blouses, and hang them on these hooks ; and then sit down, and let us get acquainted."

They obeyed, and looked round with pleasant curiosity at the conveniences of the waggon, which was sixteen or seventeen feet long, six feet wide, and, in the middle, six feet high. It was fitted round with lockers, like the cabin of a ship, above which were shelves and hooks. An immense chest stood in the midst, which, the stranger said, contained his arms, and on which he placed his mattress at night. A small open stove was heated, upon it a tea-kettle was steaming, and before it stood a Dutch oven containing venison steaks, which the visitors thought emitted a delicate perfume.

" Now, let us talk," said the stranger ; " do you go on, while I make the tea. These steaks are positively the last meat I have till I cut up my eland, which was a famous load—a hundredweight, I should say—and capital food you'll find the haunch the day after to-morrow, when, of course, you'll dine with me. By the bye, let us introduce ourselves. I am Captain Elliott, of the —th, absent on leave, which will be out in another month, and how I am to reach the Cape in that time I cannot see now, for, you perceive, I am stranded on an African karroo ; a worse fate than

Robinson Crusoe's on his desert island. Now, gentlemen !”

The two friends introduced themselves by name ; and the tea being prepared, the steaks dished, and some biscuits produced from a locker, they sat down to enjoy their luxurious repast, and to hear Captain Elliott's story.

CHAPTER XIII.

Captain Elliott's Story. The Turn-out from Cape Town. The Revolt and Desertion of the Hottentots. The Miseries of Solitude. A Visitor to the Ladies. Striking the Tents. The Sleigh on Wheels. Mr. Pinchard's affair with a Lion. A new Encampment.

"My friends jeered me heartily when I set out from Cape Town on my grand hunting expedition, and prophesied that I should never cross the Orange River ; but they were mistaken. I had this light vehicle, a span of fifteen oxen to draw it, three good horses for hunting, lots of provisions, luxuries, arms, and ammunition, a few choice books,"—pointing to a shelf,—“and six fair-spoken Hottentot varlets for servants. A pretty successful affair we made of it, though I had my crosses and vexations ; delays and extortions when I came upon a village, with its crafty chief, and had endless altercations with my lying and drunken men. But I have killed the rhinoceros and the giraffe ; and lions, elephants, and antelopes by scores. You needn't look round for trophies ; all are gone, except a dozen skins lying over my waggon, and this carpet,”—a comfortable tapestry of the skins of the leopard and giraffe which covered the floor.

“So long as I killed a rhinoceros, a zebra, or an elephant every day for the fellows to glut themselves on, all was right ; but game got scarce, and I insisted on penetrating farther north than any other hunter had done. Then three of the rascals deserted me,

carrying off some of my valuable tusks, two guns, and my horses ; so that I was unable to pursue them. We had by that time reached the karroo ; the drought was excessive, and the springboks were migrating south, and yet I was such a fool as to persist in going forward, hoping to reach a region of greater plenty, instead of being content to follow the example of the springboks. My men murmured loudly, and were impertinent. I horsewhipped them ; that did no good : they turned sullen, and would not hunt for me. We reached this spot, and were glad to find pools of water which refreshed my surviving oxen. Seven were dead, and this waggon was a frightful load for eight animals.

“ One morning, I set out alone with my gun to ramble up the river, hoping to meet with some animals coming to drink. I had walked six miles before I succeeded in killing an eland, which, though I cut off the head, was still a ponderous weight. The day was intolerably hot, and it was dark night before I reached my encampment. All seemed unaccountably still ; I did not even hear the lowing of my poor cattle, and I wasn't altogether comfortable. I stepped into my dwelling, struck a light, and looked round ; then I saw the thing at once. The vile dogs had robbed and deserted me. Such of the lockers as they could force they had opened and ransacked. The greatest part of my money was gone ; my wine and brandy casks, ham, cheese, two rifles, incautiously left suspended from the roof, some cartridges, all the ivory and the best skins, and, basest trick of all, the whole span of oxen.

“ Here I was, immovably fixed on this desolate

spot, alone, and almost destitute. I sat down to think about it. It was all my own fault, and no mistake ! I was pig-headed, and then I must needs bluster and get ferocious, and flog the ignorant heathens who didn't know good from evil. I was right served. Now, Mr. Beaumont, tell me what would you have done in such a case ? ”

“ I believe,” answered Albert, “ that my first impulse would have been to thank God that the men had not murdered me as I slept.”

Captain Elliott shook hands with Albert, and continued. “ Thank you, my dear fellow ; I was afraid you might laugh at me if I spoke the truth, but, graceless as I had been, I did kneel down and put up a few words of thankfulness that I had not been butchered before I had time for a prayer.

“ Fortunately my armoury was impregnable ; you see this is a *Chubb*,—too much for the rogues. Then I had half a dozen lockers crammed with biscuit, which they either had not succeeded in breaking open, or they had not fancied the contents. The oxen were provided with pack-saddles, on which they had doubtless suspended their booty, and they could travel leisurely, for they knew I could not pursue them. After I had discovered all the mischief they had done, I felt more composed. My prayers had done me good, and I made up my mind to resign myself to God's will. I skinned and cut up my game, lighted my stove, and made my supper ready ; and after eating it, I offered another prayer, and though all seemed awfully lonely at first, I soon forgot my cares.

“ It was something new to me, and a wholesome exertion, to do everything for myself ; and next

morning, the duties of arranging my own apartment, bringing water from the river, and preparing my breakfast, amused me for a time ; but every now and then I shuddered to think that I was in fact a prisoner, though the world was open round me ; for, to leave my waggon and proceed on foot, carrying the necessary provision, seemed impossible : and yet if I remained, I must perish alone and unknown in the wilderness.

“ I had a sore struggle for some days, and I think I must have gone mad, if I had not taken to reading the glorious Psalms, and comforting promises of our Lord and Saviour. But, God be thanked, I was resigned at last ; I rambled about with my gun all day and returned at night to cook my supper ; after which I read, and conjured up all sorts of pleasant adventures that were to bring me relief. Many a caravan of hunters did I dream of, but never of two wanderers like myself coming to add their stock of misery to my own.

“ At length I braced up my resolution to take a small stock of provision in a knapsack, such arms and ammunition as I could carry, and with a good pair of walking boots on my feet, to set out stoutly to walk south for a few days, and if appearances were worse instead of better, just to turn back to the old station. But it pleased God to overturn this plan, for the vexatious rains began on the very eve of my intended departure. And here I have been sitting, but half-alive, ever since, never leaving my waggon but when I wanted a beast for food ; and here I might have remained idle for weeks, if I could have lived so long, if you had not come to cheer me, and if a gleam of hope for the future had not raised my spirits last night, when one of my

stout little oxen had the honesty to return to his duty, having contrived to escape from his captors. Now, gentlemen, this is the end of the longest yarn I ever spun in my life at one sitting ; and I will rest and listen to your story."

Albert related their adventures, not without many interruptions and exclamations of wonder, compassion, and mirth from the volatile host ; and when the story was ended, he declared that he must immediately call upon the ladies. "But then," added he, "how can I have the face to show myself in this trim ?"

Truly his garments were rough, and somewhat seedy, but Charles re-assured him by showing his own attire. "The ladies are used to such things now," said he ; "I really believe we have not a good pair of shoes or boots left among us : and if we have to continue this wild, vagabond life much longer, we shall have to take to skin *karosses*."

"Well, then, help me to skin and cut up the eland," said Elliott ; "for I must stow the meat inside, or the hyænas will pick the bones before I am out of sight."

They gladly assisted him to cut up the animal, which was nearly as large as an ox, and in very good condition, notwithstanding the previous long drought ; but Elliott said that the eland, like the gemsbok, could subsist without water, and was one of the treasures of the desert, the largest of the antelopes, and most excellent food.

"Suppose we carry a haunch to the camp," continued he. "I conclude you'll not be overdone with venison, or beef, as you may call it, for you see the clumsy legs are like those of the ox. When well

roasted, the haunch is a delicate morsel, and I'll instruct the cook myself. There, hang the skin over the tilt, Staunton, and when the dry weather returns, we'll try our hand at shoe-making."

Chattering and working, they soon cut up the eland; the large haunch was hooked to the pack-saddle of the ox, which was tied up behind the waggon. The new friends then entered to perform their ablutions.

"You are a lucky fellow, Elliott, to have soap yet," said Charles. "We haven't had a piece this month at our place, and we have been thankful when we could even get water, for what the stern captain calls 'unnecessary purposes.'"

"I will take the ladies a present of soap," said Elliott, opening a locker half filled with that useful article. The friends could not help laughing as he put into a bag a bar of common brown, and a dozen pieces of Windsor soap. Then the generous young man filled another bag with biscuit, and these were also hung to the pack-saddle; and fastening up his door, he led off the quiet ox. They cheerfully set out through the rain to gladden the anxious expectants at the camp; nor did the way seem long, for their hearts were light, and their hunger appeased by Elliott's good fare.

Removing the large piece of rock that closed the entrance to the inclosure, the two friends first entered, and before the assembled party could express their joy, Elliott followed with his laden ox. For a moment all were struck dumb, then Captain Elliott was presented to Captain Stockport as a wanderer like themselves. After this ceremony he was welcomed by the rest, and they were soon as intimate as

if they had known each other for years ; and so noisy, that Miss Keenmark looked distressed, and said, " I fear, Captain Elliott, you will think my young pupils are somewhat savage from living this republican life of the wilderness ; but I trust they are quite prepared to resume the polished tone of good society if God should please to restore us to it."

" But as long as I live, Miss Keenmark," said Margaret, " I must look on Marshall, Dick, and all our good and faithful companions, as friends."

" That's the right spirit, my sweet maiden," said Elliott. " If I had had a spark of it, and had treated my servants like friends instead of slaves, I might have been spared a good deal of trial ; but I'm none the worse for that, after all."

Then Elliott presented the eland meat, the biscuits, and the soap, with so much good-nature, that he won all hearts, and Norah especially breathed a blessing on him for the present of such " an illegant bar of soap." He had to tell his story once more, and then cheerful projects for the future were discussed.

" These tents are not bad," said Elliott, " but you ladies must live in my waggon ; only you will have to move, for there is no getting it here. Could you ride that little quiet beast of mine, Mrs. Churchill ? It would carry you beautifully, and we could hold you on, and lead it."

" But if we took possession of your waggon, where would you live yourself, Captain Elliott ?" answered she.

" I never thought of that," said he ; " but the thing is easy enough. We could soon get up two or three tents round the waggon, after the fashion of these. I

have the skins, and you have poles and ropes. We had better begin at once."

"I think not," answered Mrs. Churchill. "In the first place we are hungry, and are desirous to have a steak from your handsome present. Next, it is too late in the day to move our ponderous baggage-sleigh; and lastly, we are sailing under the command of Captain Stockport, and must wait his sanction of the step."

"It is a step farther on our regular route, and therefore I approve it," said the captain.

"That's right, sir," said Elliott, "and as soon as we have a fair fit of weather, we will move forward, depend on it, somehow or other. I fancy we could make straight to Delagoa better than working down the rough and dangerous road to the colony."

"Sir!" answered the captain, in astonishment, "we are within the Tropic, and several degrees north of the latitude of Delagoa Bay."

"I have no doubt you are right," replied he; "you are the man to steer, I see; it's quite in your way. I will do the purveying, which will suit me better."

"But, gentlemen," suggested Marshall, "I've had some experience of that east coast; I've been up the rivers, ivory hunting, and I can tell you we may meet with some dangerous fellows that way."

"We are no poltroons, Marshall," replied Charles; "and leaving out Pinchard and Pierre as doubtful characters, we may reckon on eleven brave, well armed fellows, certainly a match for a tribe of vagabonds."

"But these vagabonds are brave too, Mr. Charles," said Marshall; "they have assegais and poisoned arrows, and could bring out thousands against our

little force, all hating white men, and ready to drink their blood."

"Pray, Marshall," said Albert, "say nothing to the ladies about these eastern savages, for to the east it seems we must go. It was Captain Stockport's first plan, and since we set out we have regularly come south-east."

Captain Elliott remained that night at the encampment, and a very pleasant evening it was to them. He knew Colonel Churchill; he knew the very house engaged for the family, and he made the young girls smile and weep as he talked of their father, and described the pleasant gardens which had bloomed and faded since their arrival was expected.

The inclosure delighted Elliott. "We must build a *kraal*," he said, "at my desert home. Night after night have I been disturbed by the ill-bred lions knocking at my very door, only too thankful that I could keep them outside. But with a stone fence round, the waggon for the great house, tents for the working people, and a little fold for the cattle, we shall have a perfect kraal, and defy the ravenous rogues."

At early dawn the four oxen were spanned to the sleigh, on which one of the skin tents was placed, and all the working men, except Captain Stockport and the doctor, set out, arranging that they should not return till next day. When they reached the waggon, they went down immediately to bring stones from the river, which was already so much increased by the rains, that the probability was that in another day the bed of the river would be covered by the rising water.

After the first load had been turned out, and break-

fast despatched, Dick, who had been examining the waggon, said to Elliott, "Maybe, captain, ye wouldn't object to len' us a pair of these wheels; they're little use to ye stannin' here. I'se see to put all reet when we're done wi' 'em, and we can easy put props an' under her. She's a canny weight I warrant."

Dick's suggestion was speedily acted on; with assistance, he soon removed an axle and pair of wheels, supplying their place with the stones brought from the river; then the sleigh was mounted on the wheels, which enabled them to work with much less difficulty. Dick, Marshall, John, and Pierre with the help of the sleigh supplied stones, while the others set to work to inclose a large space in front of the waggon with a rudely-built wall. Before night this was completed, and a small fold fenced off inside for the cattle, which were thus placed in safety. Then with weary limbs the labourers rested after their hard day.

One tent was set up next morning, the two left at the encampment were to be placed in a line with it: then a long covered colonnade was erected before the tents, formed of various skins supported by poles; and after completing this work, they set out for the camp with the wheeled vehicle, the sight of which created great amusement and joy among the females, who were busied in preparations for the removal.

"Come, ladies," said Elliott, "I want you to dine with me; so leave the chattels, and we'll send back the sleigh for them."

"We shall get wet," sighed Maude, who was still weak, and rather annoyed that she should be seen by a gay young officer in her shabby travelling-dress, and with her pretty head shorn of its flowing ringlets,

which Dr. Cameron had ruthlessly sacrificed during her illness.

"We'll see to that, miss," said Dick, who, with Charles and Marshall, was busy nailing spars upright from the sides of the sleigh; over these they spread the skin covering of the largest tent, chests and mattresses formed seats, and the seven females seating themselves in their close carriage, were driven off, with a guard walking by their side.

Captain Elliott welcomed them with great delight to their new habitation, showed them all its conveniences, for all the rifled lockers now left at their disposal; and then calling on Norah and Abdalla to make preparations for dinner, he set out with a party to bring the last freight from the old encampment, including Mr. Pinchard and Edmund, left to guard the property.

Captain Stockport looked into the waggon with a gracious smile, and said, "This is certainly better than Miss Margaret's favourite hole in the rocks. I have seen a ship's cabin less comfortable."

"Ay! captain," said Dick, who was stowing away the cargo, as he called it; "ay, this is not so far unlike the good *Madras*, if she had but a bit of life in her; but it's dowly work never to feel her heave."

"What a charming original situation is ours!" said Julia; "desert life in a waggon! I wonder where we shall next live."

"What would you say, young lady," said Dr. Cameron, "to life in the kraal of a savage tribe? We are far from the abodes of civilization, and may, indeed, thank God for an undisturbed shelter."

The ladies then went to see the progress of the new encampment; the colonnade was already completed, and they were glad to find they should have an excel-

lent exercise-ground, when tired of the close confinement of the waggon. In the tent which was put up, large stones had been placed along one side, on which it was intended to rest boards, as sleeping-places for the tenants. Mattresses could not be provided for all, but the hardy hunters required only skins and cloaks. When they returned to the waggon, they found the cookery progressing ; Abdalla, alarmed at the sight of the huge quarter of eland meat which Elliott called the haunch, had carved out a handsome joint from it, which Dr. Cameron declared was a decided sirloin of beef, and suggestive of Yorkshire pudding.

"Sorra a bit of puddin' will ye see here, dochter," said Norah. "Doesn't it bate the world for a land of famine, barrin' flesh mate, and niver a praty ; sorra a lafe of that same have I set eyes on sin' my feet landed in this."

"Let us thank God for what we have, Norah ; and not repine for what He has denied us," said Miss Keenmark, who, quite at home, was sorting linen from a trunk, which Margaret and Julia were placing in the emptied lockers ; and never having had time since they left the coast to inspect their stock of clothes, they were glad to find it would be some time before they were reduced, as Charles had suggested, to wearing skins.

In the mean time, the carriage with the last load of tents, poles, and every fragment of property, was moving towards the waggon ; Mr. Pinchard seated himself in front, but the rest, in compassion to the cattle, chose to walk. The river now flowed noisily over the rocky channel, and the bushes which skirted its banks looked fresh and green. As the carriage passed one of these thickets, the walking party were

alarmed at hearing a deep growl, and immediately after two lions issued from the bush, lashing their tails, and evidently thirsting for blood.

The rifles were raised just as the first lion sprung on one of the hinder oxen, close at the feet of the unlucky Mr. Pinchard, who uttered such a succession of piercing shrieks, that the startled lion drew back for a moment. That moment was fatal to him ; half a dozen bullets entered his breast, he reared on his hind legs, uttered a terrific roar, and fell forward against the tilt of the carriage, shattering the spars, and overthrowing Mr. Pinchard among casks and chests. The lion was soon despatched with a hunting-knife ; his companion had retreated at the sound of the fire-arms ; and it was now only necessary to restore Mr. Pinchard to his seat and his senses, which were nearly gone, and to rest a few minutes that they might carry off the lion's skin.

"Oh ! Mr. Beaumont," cried Mr. Pinchard, "I am a doomed man ! I shall never see Madras again ! All the lions pick me out ; and I do believe, Mr. Beaumont, it is all the lavender-water ! I ought to have shared it with the young ladies ; but I'm fond of it myself ; and you see I've suffered for it. But this very day I will give the whole bottle to Miss Seyton."

"She is very much obliged to you," replied Albert ; "and we will hope that she may use the gift with safety. Every lion may not have the same remarkable taste for perfumes."

They reached the waggon very proud of their trophy, though Mr. Pinchard was still pale and trembling with his fright and bruises ; and Dick shook his head as he surveyed the damages,

"Depend on it we had all a narrow escape," said

Elliott. "I know the lion well ; and though he is much less ferocious here than in Algeria, yet he is desperate when wounded, and will always rush on the assailants, unless he gets a bullet through the brain or the heart. These fellows must have been sorely famished, for in a land of plenty you rarely see the king of the beasts except in the night, when he prowls through the forests, or drinks at the river. In the day he lies gorged with food, listlessly sparing man and beast, from no nobler motive than want of appetite."

"But, Captain Elliott," said Miss Keenmark, "you must agree that the nobility of the animal's nature has been the wonder and admiration of ages. History, tradition, proverbial wisdom, alike concur to pronounce the lion the most magnanimous of beasts."

Ah ! there it is, Miss Keenmark," replied he ; "you and your gentle pupils have been reading those poetic fictions, Una softening the lion by her tears, till he forgot his 'princely puissance,' or Androcles and his grateful patient. I can tell you, madam, that a month's experience in the mountains and forests is worth volumes of these pretty tales. As to Androcles, I don't believe a word of his tale, unless he had chanced to meet with his lion after a feast ; for, if he had been half-starved, depend on it he would have made a meal of his surgeon as soon as he had completed his professional duties."

The kind-hearted soldier produced a flask of brandy, saved from the robbers, and gave Mr. Pinchard a dram, to hearten him after his "affair with the lion." After they had feasted on the sirloin, the tents were pitched, the packages brought in and arranged, and that night the consciousness of security enabled them to rest in peace.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Employments of the Rainy Season. The welcome Sunshine. The new Waggon. More Desert Wanderers. The Departure. The Ourebi. The pleasant Encampment. A Sporting Expedition. The lost Boy. Days of anxiety. Elliott's Expedition. The solitary plain. The Rescue.

As the rain continued from day to day, improvements were made in their habitations, for all could now use an axe and a hammer, and all were anxious for employment ; and though the continual pattering of the rain, and the damp earth, were far from agreeable, they bore these small evils patiently. All the clothes were repaired by Mrs. Churchill and her daughters, while Miss Keenmark read or lectured ; at length, even Maude, ashamed of her indolence, joined in some of the lighter labours ; Angeline repaired or replaced the tattered hats and caps ; and Norah and Abdalla cooked the meat procured by the ever-active hunters. Mr. Pinchard, in consideration of his misfortunes and infirmities, was often allowed to sit with the ladies ; and though they did not, as Julia proposed, offer him needles and thimble, yet John cut some long rushes from the banks of the river, and undertook to teach him basket-making, which fortunately amused, and silenced the complaints of the discontented man.

The plain was now green with long coarse grass, on which, under the charge of a herdsman, the cattle were allowed to feed during the day, but were always secured in the fold at night ; and though the roars of ravenous animals frequently disturbed the slumbers of

the community, they felt and acknowledged their safety with gratitude.

Yet this monotonous existence began to be weary to the young and active ; and, as they took their measured walk under the colonnade, plans and hopes for the future were discussed, and the clouds anxiously watched.

"I do think, Mr. Marshall, the sun is making a struggle to peep out this morning," said Julia.

"You've a sharp eye, miss," answered he ; "we're wearing round, depend on it, and a few days will show us a change. But there's no need of hurry ; these land-storms are altogether curious ; fair weather comes, then round goes the wind, and down pours the rain again."

But a gleam burst forth, and brought every one from the tents to worship the sun, like the Persians of old.

"Now, captain, when are we to sail ?" asked Charles.

Captain Stockport scrutinized the heavens on every side, looked at a small barometer hanging in his tent, which he had preserved through all troubles, and then said : "Mr. Marshall, can we be ready to-morrow ?"

"Certainly not, sir," answered he, "the car will take some rigging, and the cargo is scattered, and out of order : " and Marshall also looked at the sky and the barometer seriously.

"Then, the day after," began the captain ; but, looking at Marshall, and remembering former mistakes, he added, "But as you will ; it may be as well to wait a day or two."

But a light breeze arose, and the clouds were gently wafted away ; the sun broke out, and the chattering

of parrots and cooing of pigeons were heard from the bushes ; flights of birds were seen, and distant herds of antelopes : and now all were in joy, for nature smiled again.

The sound of busy preparation was heard on every side, for Dick had been for some time employed in constructing a waggon with the remains of the sleigh and such spars and reeds as could be readily procured. This vehicle was of much lighter weight than the cumbrous machine of Captain Elliott, which they were compelled to abandon ; but a small number of the lockers, and a considerable quantity of powder and shot, were transferred to the new waggon, and everything superfluous was condemned to be left behind. The tilt was to be covered with skins, the tents folded and strapped to the sides ; the mattresses were to be stowed at the back, and the ammunition-chest was to be suspended beneath the waggon, which was mounted on the four wheels belonging to Captain Elliott's vehicle ; and the females rejoiced in the prospect of a convenient habitation which four stout oxen could easily draw.

In order that all this work might be completed, and the final arrangements made, Captain Stockport was induced to linger three days, during which time bright mornings and showery evenings had raised alternate hopes and fears. At length the weather seemed settled ; the condemned property was consigned to the dismounted waggon, not without some repining over favourite properties, Mr. Pinchard grieving especially over a leather travelling-bag, which he declared would certainly be devoured by the hyæna and jackal ; but, after Captain Stockport had once ordered the vessel to be lightened, he would admit no

reserve,—trunks and portmanteaux were thrown overboard without ceremony.

They ate their last breakfast within the inclosure while the oxen were spanned ; then some of the females chose to walk till they were fatigued ; the rest were seated in the waggon. John and Pierre, the drivers, cracked their formidable whips, which had been made in the rainy season ; the well-trained animals lashed their tails at the sound, and prepared to start, when Hubert, who was carrying a rifle, cried out, " Now, then ! take care of yourselves over there," and pointed his gun at some dark objects at a considerable distance. In a moment Elliott sprung forward, and dashed down the arm of the youth crying out,—

" Mutiny and murder ! Here, captain, this culprit is not only disobeying orders, but intending to shoot his fellow-creatures ; for, if I have not lost my eyesight in this solitude, these must be some stragglers belonging to the wandering tribes of natives. I have a smattering of their lingo, and will hail them."

As the wanderers approached, it was seen that the party consisted of two men carrying spears, and wearing as little clothing as it was possible compatible with decency, followed by two women as lightly clad, each carrying a child in her arms, and leading one by the hand. As soon as they perceived the Europeans, they stopped, and appeared to be talking earnestly together. Then Elliott loudly pronounced some words in an unknown but musical tongue, at the same time holding out on the end of a spear a large piece of eland flesh. The effect was magical ; the poor emaciated creatures ran forward, then crawled to the feet of Elliott, and held up their hands for the meat, uttering some words in the lan-

guage common to all the Bechuana tribes, called Sichuana. Elliott gave them the meat, which they immediately tore in pieces, and devoured like famished dogs, to the amazement and distress of Miss Keenmark and her pupils, who had followed Elliott.

"Sorra a spark of dacency's in them, the crathurs!" cried Norah, much scandalized at their scant clothing; "surelie niver a Christian set eyes on such undaycent females. Arrah! woman, if ye be a woman, is it that way ye feed your babby? Is it raw flesh ye'd put in it's mouth, ye shame of the world?"

The dark lady looked at Norah in terror, as if aware that this unintelligible harangue was a rebuke to her, and drew back behind her mate, to continue her interesting occupation uninterrupted. Then Margaret tempted the elder child to her by holding out a biscuit, which was eagerly snatched and devoured.

Elliott, assisted by Marshall, the universal linguist, succeeding in understanding from the most intelligent of the two men that his name was Mataban, that of his brother, who accompanied him, was Soosoobe; that some moons before, a king who governed many tribes in the East, and whose name was unintelligible, had burnt their kraal, slaughtered their parents and friends, and driven off their cattle. They had escaped with their wives and little ones, and since that time had wandered far away from the track of their enemy, which he pointed out was south-east; but the long drought had driven the animals to the large rivers, they had rarely been able to kill any, and the girdle of famine was day after day drawn closer.

This girdle, now happily relaxed, Elliott pointed out to his friends, saying, — "The poor patient African, in the time of famine, tightens this girdle,

which relieves the sensation of hunger ; and not unfrequently he becomes a mere skeleton, still daily drawing closer his girdle till the happy season of rain brings plenty."

"And against this blessed rain," said Miss Keenmark, "our discontented nature presumed to murmur ; not perceiving it to be the gracious bounty of God, to restore life and hope to the perishing and oppressed African."

The females, in the mean time, attempted to open a communication with those of their own sex, but found the women dull and unintelligent ; the children, however, attracted by the gentle looks and sweet voices of the girls, drew near, and looked on them with awe and admiration, and soon seemed to comprehend the signs made by their young friends, who once more entered the waggon to obtain some old clothes, meant to be abandoned, in order to dress the children, who were very proud of their frocks. Then the mothers were roused to hold out their arms for similar gifts, which were readily bestowed ; and to Norah's comfort, and the satisfaction of Miss Keenmark, who presided over the toilet, the females, at least, no longer offended the sight. After this toilet, the sturdy oxen moved on, the pedestrians forming a guard on each side of the waggon, and the poor Africans following, evidently bent on becoming retainers of their generous benefactors.

"But what in the world must we do with them ?" asked Charles of the authorities.

Captain Stockport was silent ; but Elliott replied,—"Why, we cannot leave the poor scarecrows to perish after they have eaten of our salt. Was it salted, Norah ?"

"Salted, in coorse, Captain Elliott," answered she. "It's not the fresh mate ye ate the day afther to-morrow in this bad-kaping place of the world."

"You hear that, Captain Stockport," said Elliott; "they have partaken of our salt, and by all the laws of hospitality we cannot turn our hands against them now."

"I had no idea of looking on them as enemies, Captain Elliott," replied he; "and a true seaman never refuses to take on board a crew in distress. We must feed them, so long as we are not on short allowance ourselves."

"And even then, captain," said Elliott, "it is only tightening our own girdles of famine, and giving these poor wretches our half-rations."

"They shall certainly have half mine," cried Julia. "It is a very kind thought, Captain Elliott. How glad I am that we found you?"

"He is a charming *Friday*, is he not, Julia?" said Charles laughing.

"Julia is fond of extravagant flights," said Hubert. "It might really be supposed that she had never seen a brave soldier before we met with Elliott."

A laugh from the young ladies somewhat discomfited Hubert, who had certainly felt his vanity a little wounded by the distinction shown to the gallant Elliott.

As the caravan were moving onward in the usual direction, south-east, Mataban, the native who had spoken before, approached Elliott, and pointing in the direction they were travelling, drew him back, shaking his head, and uttering some words rapidly, which Elliott understood to warn him that danger lay in that road, and pointed out the safer ways to be south or south-west. Elliott explained this to

Captain Stockport, and added that he would himself undertake to be guide to the colony, though he confessed the journey would be necessarily long and perilous ; but all were ignorant of the road they were now pursuing except the Africans, and their experience denounced it as dangerous.

"Nevertheless, Captain Elliott," answered the determined commander, "I have no intention of changing my plan, which has been arranged with much reflection, and the aid of such scanty charts as former voyagers have given to the world. I propose to make to the coast, and endeavour to reach some friendly port where we may procure or construct a vessel to take us to our destination. I place small reliance, Captain Elliott, on the half-understood words of these ignorant and timid savages."

No one could reply to this ; Edmund whispered to Julia, "The law of the Medes and Persians ;" and Dick at last spoke out,—

"I side with our captain. Let him alone for steering a craft through all weathers."

"Except on the coast of Africa, Dick," answered the captain, good-humouredly, but not without a sigh when he thought on the pretty *Madras*. "But with your consent, gentlemen, I should wish to go forward, at all events, till we have some ground to anticipate danger. We have yet seen no trace of human beings, friends or foes, with the exception of these miserable wanderers."

Captain Stockport usually carried his point, and forward they travelled, the Africans continuing to follow them, over plains still widely spread and scantily covered with grass, but dotted here and there with acacias, which gradually appeared to be less stunted as

they proceeded. They had filled the water-cask before they left the river, which was fortunate, as for three days they did not fall in with water. At night the females slept in the waggon, tents were pitched for the rest, large fires were lighted, and a watch kept—the African men willingly sharing the duty. Soosoobe showed his dexterity with a bow which was given him, by bringing down guinea-fowls, and even killing a small antelope, which he called *Subokoo*, and which Edmund named *Redunca scoparia*,—the ourebi, the delicate flesh of which was a welcome addition to their provision, the party being increased, and the new retainers possessing enormous appetites. On the fourth day, a long fringe of willows denoted the existence of a river before they reached it, and stimulated the thirsty oxen to unwonted exertions. When they reached the spot, the poor animals would have rushed down the banks, dragging the waggon after them, if they had not been overpowered by numbers, and held till they were outspanned, when they immediately sought an opening on the banks, marked by the spoor of wild animals, plunged into the river, which, though rapid, was fortunately not deep, and bellowed with joy as they tasted the fresh stream, and laved their hot sides with it.

The rational part of the caravan were scarcely less eager to enjoy the cool and sparkling stream, but were compelled to ascend the river some yards in order to drink water undisturbed by the tread of the oxen. They then sat down on the green turf under a thick and drooping willow, and enjoyed the sweetest refreshment of life—pure and cool water. The river flowed north-west, and therefore Captain Stockport agreed they should continue to travel up its course as long as it

agreed with their plan ; and before night they encamped on a rich turf where many tall trees, mimosas of various kinds, all sensitive, a species of oak, and yews of great height, were scattered as if arranged by art ; and where bright geraniums, yellow marigolds, and purple amaryllis, gave the landscape the appearance of a cultivated garden. The young girls enjoyed the lovely scene, and gathered baskets of flowers to adorn their travelling-apartment, and to arrange in the fair hair of Maude, which was now recovering its beauty, and was looked on with wonder by the little African girls, on whom their European protectors had bestowed the names of Mary and Nina,—words easy to pronounce, and accurately caught by the parents, who brought the infant boys to be named also ; Hubert conferred on them the names of Pat and Tom, which the parents, after some difficulty, succeeded in pronouncing.

The rest in this shady grove was so agreeable, that a petition was made for a day's halt, to recruit the oxen, and provide game for the large daily consumption ; and as Captain Stockport had his *log* to write up, he yielded, on condition that no ammunition should be expended unless it was absolutely necessary. The foraging party was to consist of Elliott, Albert, Charles, and Marshall, armed with rifles, and Mataban and Soosoobe with bows and assegais. Hubert wished to join them, but Mrs. Churchill, who felt herself responsible for him, refused permission, and Captain Stockport confirmed the prohibition.

"Hubert," said his aunt, "you are young, rash, and conceited,—dangerous qualities for an African hunter ; and therefore I forbid you to risk your life and my peace by making one in this expedition."

Hubert was deeply offended, and saw the sportsmen depart with great annoyance. Julia strove to console him ; but he turned away with petulance, saying, " I am treated like a child ; I, that hold her majesty's commission ! I, that am bound to fight the enemies of my country, am not considered worthy to enter the field against a herd of antelopes ! I suppose Miss Keenmark will next wish to teach me crochet, and set my feet in the stocks if I disobey her ! "

Refusing to listen to Julia's persuasive consolations, he retired to his tent, from which he soon after issued, and wandered alone into a wood behind the encampment, while the rest sought some useful employment. Margaret and Julia, having succeeded in washing and dressing the two African girls, were now teaching them English words, which they acquired with greater facility than their dull countenances promised ; and, through the children, the parents had learnt the names of the objects round them.

Several hours had elapsed, the hunters had not returned ; but the rest had assembled to eat some refreshment under the trees. Hubert, however, could not be found, and Mrs. Churchill was not more hurt than Captain Stockport, for this was the first instance of insubordination shown by any of the party.

" It is plain the stubborn boy has followed the hunters," said Mrs. Churchill. " How shall we convince him of his error, Captain Stockport ? He is too old for punishment, but too young to be independent."

" If we had been on board the *Madras*, instead of in this wide vale of vexation," answered the captain, " I should have mast-headed the young man. Here, I suppose ——"

"Here, captain," interrupted Dr. Cameron, "we must have no severe laws. Depend on it, the lad will come to his senses before he returns, and will probably be both penitent and humbled."

Yet the girls wept, and Edmund felt uneasy at the absence of his brother, and all watched eagerly for the return of the hunters; but it was not till darkness had come on, and the fires were lighted, that the tired sportsmen, loaded with game, presented themselves.

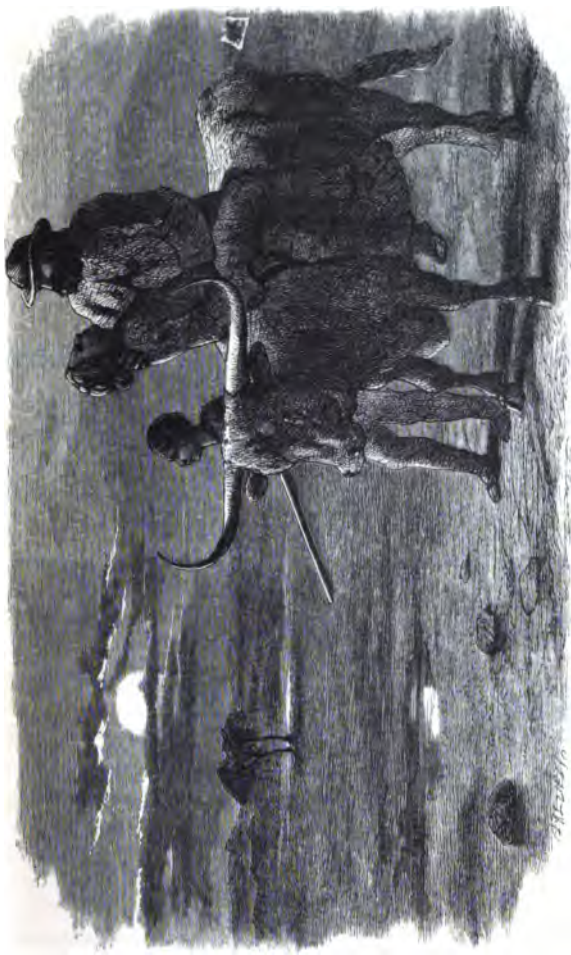
"Give us joy, Norah," cried out Elliott as they approached, "and get up a tent at once for a larder. We are the bearers of abundance; but we are very hungry, so make us some venison steaks in all haste."

"Tell Hubert to follow me into the waggon, Captain Elliott," said Mrs. Churchill. "I wish to see him alone."

"Hubert!" answered he. "In the name of Heaven, Mrs. Churchill, what do you mean? Hubert did not go with us."

Mrs. Churchill turned pale, and clung to his arm, while Maude shrieked and fainted. All was soon explained,—Hubert had never joined them; he had wandered off alone in his pride—and what had become of him?

Plans were rapidly sketched out for searching the country; but, at present, the darkness rendered these impracticable. Marshall climbed a tall yew-tree, which stood isolated at no great distance from the camp, drew up a load of dry thorns, and lighted them as a beacon to the wanderer. Then, forgetting all economy of ammunition, they fired shots at intervals during the whole night; but no answer was heard, though it was found that the boy had carried off his rifle. No one



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Elliott and Matabun bringing home Hubert.

slept that night, and at the first dawn of light they formed three parties to set out in different directions, avoiding the north, which had been their course the preceding day, and the west, towards which they felt confident he would not retrace his steps. They carried their guns to fire signal shots to the wanderer, and agreed to go forward till fatigue or success induced them to return.

What a day of anxiety did the friends at the camp pass ! How often Edmund climbed a tree, and John ascended a little hill behind the wood, to look out ; but in vain. The day slowly passed, and night brought the weary and disappointed parties, one after another, reluctantly back. Next day they struck out in new directions ; but with the same results. The third morning each party took an ox, with a rude saddle and bridle made for the occasion, to enable them to reach a greater distance. Another long day passed ; Charles and Marshall returned despondingly, Albert and Soosoobe followed soon after, equally disappointed. Then a long time elapsed, and all became doubly anxious about Elliott and Mataban, for it was now completely dark.

Suddenly a shot was heard at a very short distance. What could it mean ? Who was it ?

"It is Elliott's rifle," cried Charles ; "I know the sound ! Good or bad, he brings us news." And snatching a lighted brand, he rushed forward, followed by all the rest. They had not proceeded a dozen yards, when they met Mataban leading the ox, on which was mounted Elliott bearing before him the pale and emaciated form of Hubert, who was sleeping or insensible.

"Cheer up, Mrs. Churchill," cried Elliott, "the lad



will be all right as soon as Norah has given him some good broth, and he has had a night's rest. You see, Julia, the lions have not devoured him, though probably he may have had a little affair or two with them, of which I make no doubt he will tell you glorious tales when his tongue is loosened."

The girls wept for joy, and Mrs. Churchill and Miss Keenmark knelt down and prayed. The boy, completely exhausted, was placed on a mattress in the waggon, and cautiously fed with the rich soup which Norah had made to refresh the travellers on their return, while Dr. Cameron anxiously felt his pulse. At length, he seemed to revive a little, murmured, "Thank you all. Forgive me . . ." and then, quite overcome with drowsiness, sank on the mattress in a profound sleep.

"I don't suppose the young rogue has had a wink since he left here," said Elliott; "but sleep is his best medicine. Am I not right, doctor?"

"You are right, Elliott," answered he; "and let me tell you, young man, that you have this day earned blessings that you will remember through life. Where and how did you recover this thoughtless boy?"

"This morning," replied Elliott, "we made our course east-south-east, much to the dismay of Mataban, who chattered half-unintelligible warnings of danger to me. I think we must have gone twenty miles when we reached a line of low hills, running east and west, which shut out our view; the ascent was not difficult, and when we reached the summit, we looked down on a vast plain extending as far as we could see, scantily dotted with low bushes, and apparently a perfect solitude. Having with some trouble got our animal down a steep descent, I looked round, and could not help thinking that no spot we had met with

in our researches was more likely than this for the boy to become bewildered on. I determined, then, to proceed, ordering Mataban to mark our track; but first I fired a shot. What was my delight, a few minutes after, to hear an answering report: it was at a very great distance, and my ear failed to point out to me the direction; but the nice sense of the savage was not deceived; and though he was first alarmed by the idea that we were beset by enemies, yet, when I explained to him the nature of the signal, he immediately took the lead, and conducted me a distance I could not calculate over that bright flowery solitude. I continued at intervals to fire off my gun, but without further answer. At length, about two hundred yards before us, we saw a faint smoke. Mataban shrunk back, and looked piteously at me. 'On!' cried I, in a terrible voice, no doubt, for he took to his heels, I following as fast as my awkward steed would go. Catch me mounting an ox again, if I can help it! I couldn't endure the jolt of his trot, so I dismounted and led, or rather dragged, Vacco, for I now plainly saw a form stretched under a thorn-bush by the side of a smouldering fire. I was up to him in a moment, and found the poor lad sleeping, or insensible. I raised him, took out my flask of brandy, forced a few drops into his parched mouth, and rubbed some on his cold forehead. He opened his eyes, and smiled as he said feebly, 'Elliott, how kind!' 'Cheer up, my good fellow!' said I; 'Norah is making your supper ready, and we must set out.' 'Water,' he asked for; but water did not seem to exist on that melancholy plain, so I gave him another small dose of brandy; then, lifting him up as if he was an infant—for the poor lad must have lost a stone in those three days of

suffering and famine,—I placed him before me, and we set out to return, getting through the hills by a gorge, and falling again into our old track.

“Soon after, we fell in with a pool of water, and I was able to give him the refreshment he desired, and to bathe his face and head. Then he remained in a sort of slumber or stupor till we got within sight of your blazing fires ; and glad I was to see them, for I really began to fear poor Hubert would die of exhaustion.”

“Oh, Captain Elliott !” said Julia, weeping, “how much we all love you ; you are the very kindest person I ever knew.”

“Thank you, Julia,” said Charles ; “Albert and I feel the compliment ; but it was all Elliott’s luck : you see he had the best ground to go over.”

“You have all done well, young men,” said Mrs. Churchill. “I know you were ready to set out again to-morrow on the forlorn hope ; and I thank God your friendly exertions are not needed.”

CHAPTER XV.

Hubert's Confession. Vanity and Presumption. A Night with the Lions. Fruitless Wanderings. An Ostrich Chase. The vindictive Buffalo. Another Night of misery. A view of Death. The joyful Meeting. Mataban's Map. The River Scenery.

It was nearly twenty-four hours before Hubert finally shook off the inclination to sleep ; and though Captain Stockport was very desirous to continue the journey, Dr. Cameron and Mrs. Churchill protested against any removal till the boy was recovered. But the next evening he was able to sit up and eat some venison steaks, and being pronounced convalescent, orders were issued for the caravan to move next morning at dawn. In the mean time the delinquent made his confession.

"You were quite right to call me a boy, Aunt Churchill," he began ; "I have now found out that I am only a boy, and a very foolish boy too ; and though my three days' sad experience may not have made me much older, I trust it has made me wiser. I was so much piqued because I was not allowed to join the hunting party, but left at home, like a schoolboy, with the girls, that, after brooding over my mortification for some time, I determined to make an expedition alone. I considered that I might hold up my head higher than some of my older friends if I should be lucky enough to shoot an elephant and bring home a tusk, and I thought there would be little difficulty in such an adventure ; so I put some cartridges and pewter balls in my pockets, threw my cloak round me, beneath which I hid my

rifle, and then, while you were engaged in various occupations, I stole out unperceived behind the waggon, and made my way through the wood, determining to march towards the south, as in that direction Elliott had said elephants were plentiful.

"It was very pleasant for some miles ; a shady wood and a pretty green slope, then another wood and a wide plain ; but still no elephants. I saw many herds of various antelopes, but I would not waste powder on them ; I wanted to carry home a trophy. It was not till night came on, and I began to feel hungry, that I remembered I had my way to retrace ; and, looking back, I found this would be very difficult, for I had taken no particular notice of the road I had come. I saw that my return that night would be impossible ; and, would you believe it, aunt, my first sensation was gratified vanity, at the thought of the confusion and anxiety my absence would occasion.

"Then I began to be alarmed ; for distant roaring and shrill cries proceeded from the woods. I had rested at the edge of a stream ; but, remembering the beasts of the forest would come there to drink, I was glad, after satisfying my thirst, to remove to some distance from it. I became very uneasy, and was moreover very hungry, for I had brought no provision with me. Night fell on me suddenly ; I selected a tree with a thick trunk to protect me in the rear, and collecting a large quantity of wood, lighted it, for fortunately I had my match-box. The blaze alarmed a bird, which flew out of a bush near, and, by good luck, I shot it. It was only a small pigeon ; I skinned it, cut it to pieces, and toasted the bits on the end of my ramrod. As soon as they were scorched I eat them with great relish.

"The moon rose, and presently after I saw a huge lion stalking over the plain ; I shook with terror ; but he took no notice of me. Then I heard hideous yells, and a whole pack of jackals scoured close past me, chasing a huge eland ; they surrounded, fell on it, and began to devour it within twenty yards of my fire, snarling and fighting like dogs for their prey. Before they had finished, two lions walked up to them, and the cowardly pack made off to the woods, leaving the remains of the eland for the lions, which speedily despatched it. I could hear them grinding the bones, and my head grew giddy with fear.

"One of the lions walked off satisfied towards the stream ; the other, dragging the head of the eland, approached nearer to me. Suddenly he seemed to discover my presence ; he dropped his prey, crouched, fixed his glaring eyes on me, showed his huge teeth, and uttered a long, deep growl. I could not have defended myself, for I was, for a time, paralyzed ; then I prayed aloud to God to help me. The animal sprung up, and looked round when he heard the sound of my voice. I felt more courage—I raised my gun ; then I reflected on my danger if I should wound and not destroy him ? I once more raised my voice, I shouted, laughed, and sung like a madman : the lion drew back, evidently alarmed ; he did not condescend to run away—he never lost his dignity—but he walked slowly off the scene, like the hero of a tragedy.

"I knelt down to thank God for my preservation, I collected more fuel, and kept up my fire. I wound up my watch, and held it in my hand, that I might watch the minute-hand move. How slowly it went on ! and how thankful I was at the end of each five

minutes that I was so much nearer morning! Now and then dusky forms were visible, moving along like terrible spectres. At one time a pack of wild dogs crossed the plain, hunting an eland as orderly as if they had been a trained pack of hounds with the whipper-in at their heels, falling back in turns as each grew tired of leading, till they got round their victim, and, as I heard by their quarrelling, made a feast of it. It was long before they left the place, sometimes barking like civilized dogs, sometimes chattering like monkeys, and sometimes wailing like a crying child.

"At that time I was not drowsy, but I was dreadfully weary. I did not dare to lie down, lest I should sleep, and the fire should go out. I sat down with my back against the tree, and my gun in my hand, and began to reflect on the past. Then I saw my folly, my vanity, my presumption, my unkindness, and ingratitude, and, above all, my sin against God; and I wept and prayed, and resolved, if I was spared, to correct my faults. After midnight I became drowsy, but resolutely struggled against the feeling. I went through my old school lessons; I repeated long poems; I even tried to compose verses, but that I could not manage—I was too stupid and too anxious for my personal safety to succeed in flights of fancy.

"Often, very often, I fancied I saw a streak of light before it really came; at length the dawn appeared, and I tried to move my stiffened limbs. It was with great difficulty I got them again into action, but at last I could walk slowly, and then thought I would return home in a direction more to the west, to avoid the wood I had crossed the previous day, and into which I had seen many of the wild beasts retreat.

"I crossed the plain for a considerable distance, and then turning my face once more to the north, I saw before me another wood. Half stupified, I entered it, and wandered through its intricacies till I became perfectly bewildered. I sat down under a tree, and thought I would remain there, for I was sure I should be sought for, and found, alive or dead. As I sat, the chattering monkeys in the tree above me began to pelt me with the fruit, which I found was a sort of plum, which, though full of seeds, was very delicious. I ate several, and, much refreshed, I once more rose to try and make my way through the entangled thicket, which caught my legs and arms, and nearly prostrated me several times.

"It was several hours before, weary and torn with thorns, I emerged on a wide plain, which I was at once certain I had not crossed the day before. I had no landmark; even the sun was hidden by clouds, and I wandered on for many miles before the clouds dispersing revealed to me that I was walking towards the sun at noonday. I wished to resume my course due north, but another forest lay in my way, which I dreaded to cross. Besides, I was hungry, and resolved to shoot a bleebok or springbok, for refreshment in my need.

"I looked round for game, and saw a cluster of ostriches, with their white plumes rustling as they moved along, and my vanity revived at the thought of shooting an ostrich, and taking home the plumes for Maude and Julia; I knew you did not care for plumes, Margaret. I forgot my stiff limbs and my scratched hands, and fixing on my bird, I fired, and, I believe, wounded it; but it stretched out its sail-like wings, and galloped off in a style that

made me laugh in the midst of my troubles. Like a goose, I ran after it for nearly a mile before I discovered that, wounded as it was, it far outstripped me in speed, and I was ashamed to find I had been led still farther astray by such a foolish fancy.

"Very penitent, I was turning round to retrace my steps, when my eyes fell on the scowling forehead of a buffalo, which was breaking cover from a thicket not fifty yards from me. It charged towards me at once; but I was luckily near a lofty tree, and slinging my rifle across my back, I succeeded in climbing it before the furious monster reached me. He bellowed, lashed his tail, and butted against the trunk till the tree shook: then, seeing my cloak, which I had dropped in my ascent, he gored it, trampled on it, and tore it into a hundred pieces. How I trembled as I reflected that, but for God's mercy, I might have been the victim. Then he fixed his glaring eyes on me steadily, and remained watching till I was compelled to turn my eyes away, lest, like the birds fascinated by the glance of the serpent, I should actually fall into his mouth.

"I had heard of the obstinate pertinacity of the animal, and I wondered if he would remain many hours. It seemed as if I was doomed again to be watched all night; but the lion was a nobler foe; I loathed this hideous creature, and longed to shoot him, but the herd were not far off, and I feared to bring them all upon me. At length evening came on, the herd of buffaloes retreated to the wood. I was faint with hunger and the persecution of the buffalo, and I determined to slay him, and, like a cannibal, to feast on my enemy. I tried my pewter bullets; I fired at the wretch, and wounded him in the side; he roared with agony, and rushed off after his companions,

leaving me thankful for my escape, though disappointed of my supper.

"I was now so overcome with weariness that I longed to sleep ; but to descend to the ground would be to plunge into all the dangers and terrors of the preceding night ; and though I felt safe when perched in the tree, which was thick and spreading, yet if I slept, I ran the risk of falling, perhaps of breaking a limb, and thus being left a prey to wild beasts. I tried to bind myself to a strong bough with my girdle, but the strap was too short for the purpose ; I sat down upon the branches, and rested my aching back against the trunk ; and then tried to compose myself and pray to God for help ; but I could not remember any words, my mind was so confused. Sometimes I heard a rustling among the branches, and thought the buffalo was climbing the tree in pursuit of me ; yet I was indifferent—I was no longer afraid. Then I thought I heard Charles calling me, and I tried to reply ; but my tongue was so parched, I could make no sound. I chewed some of the leaves of the tree, they were rather acid, and cooled my mouth greatly ; I even swallowed some, though I felt great repugnance to do so. I wound up my watch, and when the moon set and I could not see the hour, I tried to guess the time by touching the hands with my fingers. Thus, in half-delirium, though still painfully awake, that terrible night wore away.

"The morning light no longer cheered me ; I felt I was lost,—banished from mankind. Then I remembered that I was alone with God, and I pleaded earnestly to him till a more cheerful hope woke in me. The sun was bright as I descended with difficulty from my perch ; I then resolved to turn my face to the

north, and go directly forward as long as my strength would permit me. That was, however, soon expended; before I had dragged myself fifty yards, I sank down beside a low bush, and felt convinced I could walk no more. I felt that death was at hand, yet still I trembled at the idea of becoming the prey of those hideous jackals and hyænas.

"For some time I lay half senseless, till I was roused by a rustling in the bush; I tried to escape, when, with a jarring cry and whirring flight, a guinea fowl rose from the bush. I had no time or strength to shoot it; but I reflected there might be a nest under the bush, and pushing aside the branches, saw, to my inexpressible delight, two eggs lying in a hole scratched in the earth. How delicious they were! How carefully I swallowed every drop of the contents, and how strong I felt for a little time after my repast. But still I found myself unable to proceed; I therefore with my knife cut a sort of niche in the bush, to enable me to rest more conveniently and securely. Then I dragged together all the dry sticks within my reach, and piled them around me, to be ready to set on fire if any danger threatened me. These efforts again exhausted me, and I fell down in my little inclosure, still holding my loaded gun, but unable to rise.

"I have no doubt that I experienced the same sensations that all must feel at the approach of death. I saw the whole of my worthless and misspent life at one view. I saw the wasted hours, the neglected duties, the idle pursuits—all too late. I could only repent, and cast myself on the mercy of my Saviour.

"As evening drew near I felt that my senses were leaving me, and I made an effort to light my fire. I saw

it blaze and burn away, bitterly conscious that when it was extinguished I should be without defence ; still I struggled against the overpowering drowsiness, and was trying to rise, that I might reach a handful of leaves to chew, when, like a sound from Heaven, the report of a gun fell on my ear. My perfect senses returned ; I knew that God was about to deliver me, and with momentary energy I fired my gun ; but the effect was too much for me,—I fell down senseless, and revived to find dear Elliott supporting me, and giving me restoratives. How can I repay you all for the trouble and anxiety I have caused you."

"You have been guilty of a graceless act, young man," said Dr. Cameron ; "but, however, you have had a fair amount of punishment, and we will say no more about it ; only I would not have these foolish girls deify you for your misdeeds ; nor would I have you eat any more steaks to-night. You had better lie down and sleep out the deficiencies of the two last nights."

"And when we do start," said Elliott, "I propose that we should go over the country our young friend has passed, that we may try to pick out the old buffalo he left his mark on, and have our revenge."

"It does not lie in our course, Captain Elliott," said the sturdy old seaman, who still clung to his own chart.

The next morning, therefore, the tents were struck, and the party pursued their way. The Africans, now clothed in light garments, followed them, acquiring hourly some new word. The children had been taken into the waggon, and Miss Keenmark had actually begun to teach them the alphabet, and succeeded in making them articulate the sounds of the letters. Cruelty and famine had crushed but not destroyed

the mental powers of the poor wandering Bechuana, and the kindness of their new friends, the comfort and security they now first enjoyed, seemed to develop their intelligence. In their gratitude, they endeavoured to learn the language, to practise the arts, and to imitate the habits of their protectors. Mataban, the eldest and most intelligent, began to comprehend Captain Stockport's plan of progress, and he held up his hands to deprecate it, uttering a long speech so rapidly, that even Elliott and Marshall failed to understand him.

Seeing that his words did not make the desired impression, he traced on the ground a sort of map of the country between them and the sea. Two winding lines they understood to be rivers running north and south ; beyond these he piled up a line of stones, and lifted up his hands towards the clouds, to signify the height. Elliott pronounced the word signifying mountains in the Sichuana dialect, as the language of the Bechuana tribes is called, and the poor man immediately repeated it, "Large mountains." Then between the rivers he marked here and there round spots, on which he indicated the figures of men lying, saying, in his new language, "Many men . . . kill . . . eat men."

Elliott looked significantly at Captain Stockport, whose brow grew dark, as he scrutinized the countenance of Mataban. "I will relinquish my office as leader, if you wish it, Captain Elliott," said he ; "but do not rely implicitly on the assertions of the Africans. I know them to be a false race. If you are willing, we will test the truth of this man by proceeding till we reach the first river he has marked, and if we find his information correct, we will not cross it, but follow its course to the south."

Compelled to be satisfied with this concession, they moved on in the same direction as before ; several low hills made their progress slow and tedious ; but, as they crossed each hill, they were gratified to find the scenery gradually becoming richer, and game more abundant. The eland was seen among the scattered groups of trees, while on every side were herds of springboks, mingled with the hartebeest, the koodoo, the odd-looking gnou, and the heavy quagga. The plains swarmed with life, to the delight and admiration of the young observers, and the great satisfaction of the natives, who saw only the provision this abundance would afford.

The sportsmen were sorely tempted ; but prudence and humanity commanded forbearance, and they were content to bring out their bows in the morning to shoot one of the antelopes for the day's provision, and the clamorous guinea-fowls were spared in the wealth of food. In this land of plenty the lions and the hyenas were so well fed, that less anxiety was felt by the travellers for the safety of the useful cattle or their own lives, though they still kept up their watch-fires at night.

Through this delightful country they travelled many days, resting on the Sunday, as usual, to recruit their strength, to celebrate divine service, and to read and converse. They observed, with pleasure, that the natives paid great attention to the service, kneeling when they knelt, and evidently understanding the nature of their occupation. Miss Keenmark, who had already acquired a little of the language from the women and children, undertook to instruct them in sacred subjects, and through them she hoped the men might seek to know the faith. She discovered, from

conversing with them, that they had heard a white man pray many, many moons before in their kraal ; and with him were his wife and two daughters, all white, "like dat," they said, touching the delicate face of Maude. But then, the woman said,—then came the bloody *Moselekatse* and his warriors, who stabbed all the people with their assegais, and burnt the kraal, and the white man's house too. Mataban and Soosoobe with their wives had escaped ; they had been joined by a small remnant, who had, like them, fled from the murderers ; but all had died of famine except themselves, and they had only dragged on their precarious existence by following the track of the springbok, of which they occasionally obtained one, and at other times they lived on berries, insects, or roots. It was long before this story was fully comprehended ; but Mataban confirmed the facts, adding, that the missionary and his family were doubtless either murdered or enslaved.

The knowledge which the natives possessed of the country was really useful, and even Captain Stockport began to have more confidence in their honesty, when tiny rills and noble forests announced the neighbourhood of a river. Nothing could be more splendid than the surrounding scenery. Vistas of magnificent forest trees shaded the travellers from the rays of the sun, and murmuring streams cooled the air. Every step they made was upon flowers of the most brilliant dyes,—the geranium, calceolaria, amaryllis, and many unknown plants ; while from every tree, parrots of bright colours, and various birds of the richly-varied plumage peculiar to tropical ornithology, uttered their noisy notes.

"No wonder the early travellers in Africa gave to

the world such tales of wonder and enchantment," said Miss Keenmark.

"I doubt much," answered Dr. Cameron, "that any early traveller penetrated far into the interior. But I may be mistaken, and if so, doubtless the first visitor to this wondrous land would be struck with wonder and awe at the mysterious aspect of nature, and the sight of a new and extraordinary race of men. The immense and entangled forests, the monstrous forms of animal life, the vast trackless deserts, would all appear to belong to a region of enchantment, of which the fabulous dreams have in all ages captivated men."

"At all events," said Miss Keenmark, "this spot is truly the paradise of earth; here might fancy pour out its legends, and romance find a home. Observe, Edmund, the willows that bend over that pellucid stream are the true *Salix Babylonica*, the same species as those under which the captive Hebrews sat down and wept when they remembered Zion."

Though Mataban could not possibly understand the words and allusions of Miss Keenmark, he comprehended her admiration of the scenery, and beckoning the party to follow him, he turned through a grove at one side of their road, and pointed to a spot where the remains of burnt huts and ruined inclosures marked the site of a demolished kraal. Around this, scattered bones, which the hyena and the vulture had stripped of flesh, denoted a bloody massacre. Mataban shook his head and said, "Bad man, Moselekatse, kill many, many men."

This was by no means a cheering sight to the timid, and Mr. Pinchard began to whimper, and beg Captain

Stockport to turn back to the Karroo, where there were no savages.

"What, Mr. Pinchard," said Marshall, "do you want another *skrimmage* with a lion? Hold up your head, sir, and who knows but you may send a shot into one of these cannibal chiefs yet."

"God forbid, Mr. Marshall!" answered he; "God forbid we should ever encounter them. They are like bees in a hive,—there's no counting them, Captain Elliott says; we may all be killed and eaten!"

"There's not much of you to eat," said Dick, with some contempt; "and what there is would be poor eating. It's my opinion, Mr. Pinchard, that better folks would be roasted afore you."

But this assurance was poor consolation to Mr. Pinchard, who considered that his fate would come at last; and his murmurs were incessant till Mrs. Churchill, with her usual stern control, ordered him to be silent, and thankful that he had such brave protectors. Still all the party felt they were on dangerous ground, and Miss Keenmark's Eden, like all earthly Edens, had its serpent.

Captain Stockport now believing in the existence of the river, agreed to diverge south, up its course, when they reached it, and this, Captain Elliott was of opinion, would lead them to the range of mountains from whence it had its source; and which he knew lay to the south-east.

"I believe," said Albert, "that most of the rivers of South Africa rise in the Cordilleras of Lupata, to which you allude, and that some of these rivers run east to the Indian Ocean, others west to the Atlantic."

"They run that road, sure enough, Mr. Beaumont,"

said Marshall ; “ but few of them ever see the Atlantic,—the droughts suck them up half-way. I know them mountains well, sir ; I’ve had some trips up the rivers over at the east, and a queer set of wild savages build their nests thereaway. Captain Stockport knows my thoughts, sir, that the longer we keep on this side of them same mountains, the safer we are.”

Most of the party agreed with Marshall, and when another day’s journey brought them to the shores of a river, now deep and rapid after the rains, they were not sorry to turn their faces south, and journey along the pleasant banks of the water, adorned with the graceful iris and water-lily ; and fringed with small rushes, which the girls collected, and under the direction of Angeline, plaited and sewed together, so as to form a kind of large hat. These were so convenient, that the nimble fingers of the girls were kept busily employed till every one of the party, even the Africans and their children, had these sun-hats.

CHAPTER XVI.

Traces of the Savages. The cry of "To Arms." The Breach of Truce. Captivity. The Hunt of the Hippopotamus. The Plan of Escape. The Flight of the Females. Nangasi calls on the Fire-Spirit.

MORE than once the travellers were startled by the sight of a ruined kraal, or the traces of a fire,—significant marks of the presence and cruelty of man, which they viewed with mingled feelings of abhorrence and dread of the savage, and hope of escaping from the solitude of that wild desert, uncheered by man's existence, to which no one but Mr. Pinchard desired to return.

"The people we meet," said Margaret, "may be as simple and inoffensive as Mataban and Soosoobe. We shall then be glad to have them to assist us in our labours, and we can, in our turn, talk to them of God and His great works, and teach them to love Him and pray to Him."

Many a prayer was secretly uttered that they might meet no natives fiercer than Mataban and his brother. The next morning the dexterous archers shot an ourebi, and in the heat of noon, the travellers reclined under the wide-spreading branches of a clump of mimosas, while Norah and Abdalla, at a little distance, cooked the venison. Languor and ease had induced the lazy to sleep, when they were all effectually roused by Abdalla rushing forward, his eyes rolling wildly, and his arms extended, crying out, "Many, many enemy! dey come quick; Abdalla fight dem! He cry, 'To arms!'"

It was a fearful cry, and all sprung up and mustered in line, though for what they knew not, till they saw a crowd of Africans approaching, wearing only short tunics, carrying large shields covered with skins, and armed with assegais, or short spears, bundles of which were suspended across their backs. Maude shrieked and fainted, and Angeline fell into hysterics; the rest of the females were calm, though pale and trembling; and Mr. Pinchard, to the astonishment of every one, seized a gun, and, with his eyes starting from his head, placed himself in the rear rank.

"If possible, my friends," said Mrs. Churchill, "meet these men amicably. Endeavour to treat with them before you enter into action. Relinquish everything, if our lives and liberty be preserved."

"You are a woman of wisdom, madam," said Captain Stockport; "Marshall, approach them with a green branch, the common flag of truce among savages. Let Mataban accompany you; he may know their tongue."

Mataban showed great reluctance; he said these were the warriors of a great king of the east, who murdered or enslaved all men he encountered. He, however, joined Marshall; and, with all the dignity of ambassadors, they advanced slowly to meet the savages, now close at hand, and shouting wildly. The chief, distinguished by his lofty stature, and by a sort of tippet thrown over his shoulders, formed of the tails of animals, waved his hand as the ambassadors drew near, and silenced his followers.

Marshall had not had time to receive instructions; he was, however, a prudent man, and having acquired the language of Mataban tolerably, he ventured to deliver his own credentials.

"I come from the Great Chief of the pale men," said he, "to give welcome to the Dark Chief, and to ask him to eat meat in our tents. We are friends and strangers, seeking to reach the sea, that we may find ships to carry us to our own country."

The chief answered pompously and slowly, which enabled Marshall to understand him without difficulty.

"The Great Lion of the East, the king of all the dark men, owns all the country where his warriors set their feet. No stranger must come into his land to look round, to carry away his young men for slaves, and to kill his elephants, that they may dig out the teeth. The Lion tells his chiefs to kill all the white men who come to rob him."

"We are no robbers," replied Marshall, calmly. "We are shipwrecked travellers. We want only food and water. We wish to be your friends; but we are also warriors; and if you oppose us, we can be dangerous foes."

"Can your warriors throw an assegai as I can?" said the barbarian, flinging the short spear into the midst of the watchful European party. It passed through the cloak of Mr. Pinchard, and nailed him to the trunk of the tree against which he leaned, without injuring him. In his alarm and confusion, Mr. Pinchard discharged the rifle he held, without consideration of friend or foe, and the man at the chief's right hand fell dead.

Struck with terror, many of the savages fell with their faces to the ground; but the chief stood unmoved, nor did his countenance change.

"I have heard of the mighty Fire-spirit of the white man," said he: "Give this Spirit to us, that we may conquer our enemies, and you shall depart."

"The Fire-spirit will only obey those who know how to subdue him," replied Marshall. "Because you are a chief, we will teach you to call on him ; but your followers must not approach him."

The chief paused, and then said, "I will not kill you. I will lead you and your warriors to my Great Father. You shall show him the Fire-spirit."

This was a terrible alternative, but not without hope, and when the chief added, "Show me your warriors," Marshall and his henchman sorrowfully led the way to the encampment. The women had shut themselves within the waggon, from whence they watched fearfully the dark army spreading themselves round to inclose the firm little band of their defenders. Marshall went up to Captain Stockport, and explained the terms offered.

"We must affect to agree," said Albert, "on condition that all our property be left untouched. I have calculated their number not to be less than one hundred and fifty ; but we have a power they fortunately regard as miraculous, and I do not despair of effecting our escape."

So it was agreed ; Marshall, after pointing out Captain Stockport as the chief of the party, signified the conditions he required from his dark opponent, adding, that if these conditions were in the least degree violated, the Fire-spirit would avenge the offence as speedily as the breach of the truce had been noticed.

In the mean time the venison smelt temptingly, and the sable chief announced his intention of eating with his pale brethren ; wherefore, while Norah provided for the party in the waggon, Abdalla brought dishes of steaks, and placed them before his masters

and their guest, who, though doubtless astonished at all he saw, was perfectly calm, and reclined on the ground like his entertainers. He was about to stretch out his hand to help himself from the dish, when Marshall presented him with a plate piled up with meat, which he told him was his share, and which disappeared with a rapidity surprising to civilized man. Still he evidently desired to imitate the habits of the rest, and even tried to use a knife and fork, but finding the process too tedious for his patience, he returned to the habits of nature. He was more than once supplied before his appetite was appeased ; then, grace being said, Marshall informed him the remains of the repast were to be given to his warriors. He showed a grim satisfaction on hearing this ; and calling his favourites—"the most brave," he said—he bestowed on them the fragments, which they devoured with the voracity of famishing men.

The chief was then told that his captives were ready to follow him, on condition that the night encampments should be distinctly apart, though near enough for him to be assured that his prisoners were safe, to which he ungraciously consented. The oxen were then spanned, the Europeans guarding the waggon on each side, and creating much wonder and curiosity among such of the savages as were not too proud to evince their feelings. The warriors formed the front and rear of the caravan, which then moved on towards the south, much to the surprise of the captives, as it was from that direction the troop had come upon them. They did not, however, think it prudent to question their leader, but continued to converse with each other in English on the probabilities of escape, Dr. Cameron occasionally visiting

the prisoners in the waggon to communicate events or plans.

"Our position is terrible, my dear doctor," said Mrs. Churchill; "but we escaped the Arabs, and, by God's help, we may surely get from the clutches of these ignorant savages. Skill and prudence may effect much; but there must be no cowardice, no half-measures, no disunion: our strength lies in our firmness."

"Undoubtedly, madam," replied he. "Remember, this is the council-chamber—here our resolutions must be agreed on; and however hard the conditions may seem, all must submit to them."

The young girls smiled at the grave charge of their good friend, and began rather to relish the adventure, especially when they reflected on the power of the Fire-spirit, so dreaded by the Africans. Then each had some pet plan of escape.

"If we could but meet with a cave," said Julia, "with a secret entrance that defied discovery!"

"Which, as we are not in sight of a mountain, is not very probable," said the doctor.

"Or a canoe?" suggested Miss Keenmark.

"My dear lady," replied he, "canoes or boats of any kind are never met with among the inhabitants of the interior of this country: in the dry season the rivers are easily forded; when they are swollen by the rains, the natives lie upon, or bestride, a beam of wood with a peg at the end, which they grasp with one hand, and with the other hand and the feet paddle across the stream."

"Then, Dr. Cameron," said Margaret, "I suppose we must literally run away; but will not these swift barbarians speedily overtake us?"

“We must endeavour to evade pursuit, Margaret,” replied he. “But our plans are yet vague and unsettled. One thing is probable, that we shall have to escape by detachments. For this reason, you must all submit to be entirely inclosed here, which will not surprise the Africans, who frequently seclude their women. Thus your escape may be accomplished without suspicion or detection.”

“It would be prudent, then, to appoint a trysting-place at once,” said Miss Keenmark; “and I propose it should be that mimosa-grove, of melancholy associations, where we first encountered our captors.”

“Very good, Miss Keenmark,” answered the doctor. “I will signify the place to the rest; especially to Mataban and Soosoobe, who, we propose, should abscond from us; and, if possible, you must flee with them.”

“I will not trust myself with these savages; I will remain here, Dr. Cameron,” exclaimed Maude.

“Very well, Miss Seyton,” said he, coolly. “It is merely the choice between the friendly savage and the inimical savage. If you remain, you must be conveyed to the court of the King Umjuhale, or King Moselekatse, or some other dark potentate, for we can only save you females by sending you before us.”

“I will arrange all, doctor,” said Mrs. Churchill. “We will be ready when you summon us. These poor women and children must accompany us, and, if possible, spare us our faithful Abdalla.”

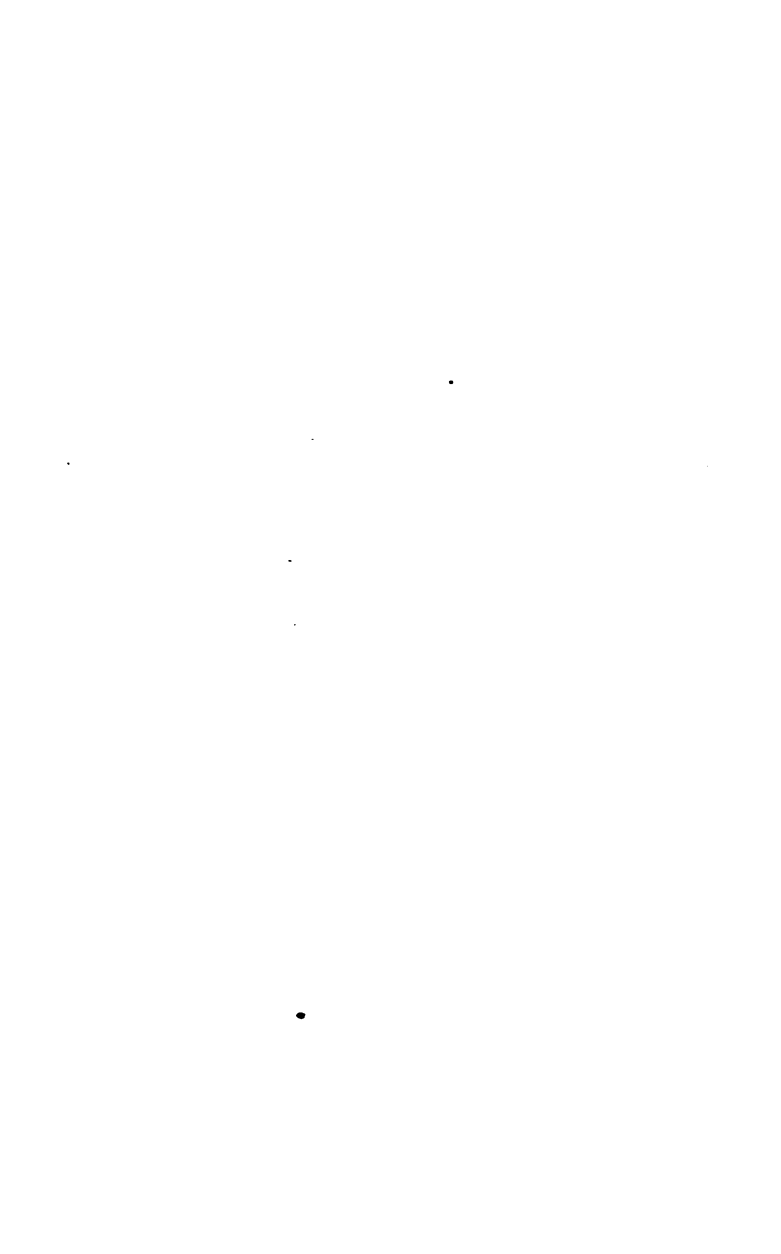
Dr. Cameron then returned to his friends to report his arrangements, and the caravan moved on till the shades of night arrested them, and they encamped on the banks of the river. The Europeans pitched their tents, and lighted large fires near the waggon; the

African fires were twenty yards distant from them. Some of the warriors lay down on the ground, but a party set out to the river to hunt the hippopotamus by moonlight, followed by Charles, Albert, and Elliott, carrying their guns, but resolved not to call on the Fire-spirit except on emergency, lest familiarity should breed contempt.

As they drew near the reedy banks of the river, a great snorting and blowing were heard, which the natives recognized with delight, as signs of the presence of the *Imfooboo*, as they call it, and motioned to the strangers to follow their example, and hide in the thicket. From hence, through the reeds, they saw a huge head occasionally raised from the water to breathe, temptingly inviting a shot, which prudence forbade. The Africans made no sign of assault, and Charles whispered to his friend, "How do these fellows mean to obtain their game? Sharp as their assegais are, I fancy the point would be blunted if they were to *shy* one at that thick-skinned brute."

But now one of the huge shapeless creatures was seen making its way through the reeds, scrambling awkwardly along on its short legs, and feeding on the long grass as it moved from the shore. Still the hunters remained immovable, and Charles was turning round impatiently to demand the reason of their forbearance, when suddenly the animal disappeared, and a loud bellowing was heard. It was evident the beast had fallen into a pit dug for the purpose, and doubtless the Africans had returned to this spot for the purpose of looking after the trap.

Roused by the furious cries of their companion, two more animals came crashing through the reeds, bellowing their sympathy. The position of the hunters





Elliott shoots the Hippopotamus, and saves the life of an African



Elliott shoots the Hippopotamus, and saves the life of an African



was somewhat alarming, and to render it more dangerous, the Africans directed a volley of assegais against the two hippopotami which appeared last ; many of the weapons fell harmless, but several pierced the curious pink skin of the beasts, and remained fixed, while blood flowed from the wounds. One of the animals turned back to the water, and plunging in, head foremost, disappeared ; the other, roaring frightfully, rushed directly at the bush where its assailants lay, and trampling down all before it, overthrew one of the men, and stooped to gore him with its long tusks.

There was no time for hesitation, Elliott sprung forward, pointed the piece behind the ear of the animal, a well-known vulnerable part, and shot it dead. The poor savages, in awe and terror, bowed down before the mighty conqueror, and when the man he had saved extricated himself from his heavy burden, bruised and in pain, he crawled to the feet of Elliott, and declared himself his slave. The Africans in the mean time, finding the entrapped animal, which had been impaled on a sharp pole, struggling in the agonies of death, despatched it with their assegais, and dragged it from the pit. Then, loaded with the two monsters, the triumphant party returned to the encampment, to lay the spoil at the feet of the chief, Nangasi, and to relate the wonderful adventure of the visit of the Fire-spirit.

The animals were cut up, a portion of the flesh presented to the captives, then, after half-cooking the meat on pointed sticks before the fires, the troop regaled themselves on their abundant provision ; the most famished devouring their portion quite raw.

The flesh of the hippopotamus resembles pork,

with a large proportion of fat, and when cooked by Abdalla in steaks, was allowed by all, after conquering a little repugnance, to be good meat; even the ladies unwittingly made an excellent supper on hippopotamus flesh, and it was not till some days after that they discovered the nature of their repast. Next morning they continued to travel up the shores of the river to the south-east, and during the day the European sportsmen shot with their bows an ourebi and a pair of Guinea-fowls for their own table, and accompanied the dark hunters in the chase of a herd of quaggas, the plains being covered with vast numbers of these inelegant creatures. The skilful Africans laid several of these animals low with their assegais, to their great joy. The asinine appearance of the quagga deterred the Europeans from sharing in the feast of their dark brethren, and they were glad to have obtained other provision. The next morning the chief relaxed his silent dignity, to enter into some conversation with Marshall and Elliott, whom he seemed to look upon as chiefs like himself, and whose language he comprehended.

"When I return to my great father," he began, "his words will be, 'What have my warriors done? I see only some white prisoners; I will not kill them; I will take them to my kraal; they shall be my friends; they shall stay with me for ever. But I hear no lowing of cattle; I see no heads of my enemies; my warriors have returned empty-handed: they are cowards!' Then Nangasi will no longer be a chief. We must attack a kraal of the foes of my father; we must slay the men, and drive away the cattle. Come with my warriors, brave white man, and bring the Fire-spirit with you, that all my foes may fall

dead : I am also a chief ; the Fire-spirit must obey me."

"Not so, Nangasi," replied Elliott. "I may not follow you to battle without the orders of my own great chief. I must talk long with him ; when the sun rises to-morrow you shall know his decision."

Nangasi was compelled to be satisfied, and Elliott hastened to communicate the important project to his friends. The prisoners in the waggon were ordered to be ready at a moment's warning, if circumstances should favour the attempt, and minute instructions were given to the faithful Abdalla and the grateful Africans, which they promised strictly to obey. Then with apparent calmness, but much hidden agitation, they awaited the event ; making very little progress during the day, as the kraal which the horde intended to attack was at no very great distance to the south, while their course along the river carried them south-east. A party of the Africans spent great part of the day in hunting the buffalo, and returned at night laden with huge carcasses.

A scene of gorging immediately commenced ; the savages ate till, unable to move, they sunk down beside their fires in a heavy sleep or stupor. This was the moment for action. On two of the oxen pack-saddles were fitted, with hooks on which to suspend baggage. To these hooks were attached bags containing absolute necessaries, and the light European tent was attached to the side of one of the animals. Placed in the shade behind the waggon, all this was rapidly and safely effected ; and it was arranged the ladies should mount by turns, as fatigue or weakness rendered it necessary.

Then the females cautiously descended from the

taking care to give him no ball cartridge. After two or three attempts, he succeeded in discharging the piece ; but he was told the gun would not carry death unless the Fire-spirit chose it. He was, however, perfectly satisfied with making the report, which he believed would effectually terrify his enemies into submission, and was so much pleased with his amusement, that he would have continued it the whole day, but Captain Stockport peremptorily forbade any further waste of powder.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Expedition against the Umonti. The last Experiment. The Escape. The grateful Fugitive. The Party again united. The Ford of the River. The Crocodile. The View of the Mountains. The Pursuers in sight. The Oxen in Flight. The Refuge.

EVENING at length drew near, and the hunters again brought in a large supply of buffalo-flesh, of which the prisoners gladly accepted a large haunch. Again the Africans feasted themselves to repletion, after which Nangasi and his warriors departed, leaving twenty or thirty men only to guard the prisoners, of whom Nangasi seemed to have no suspicions, believing that they would not abandon their valuable waggon, and they had no means to carry it off.

Then came the last experiment. A bottle of brandy still remained of Captain Elliott's stores ; to this they added a sufficient quantity of water, which Dr. Cameron had mingled with as much laudanum as was necessary. Then they sat down, and affected to be drinking the liquor from a small cup, exciting the envy of the Africans, who drew near, and looked on them with a longing eye. They were invited to partake of the liquor, and each had a cup of the drugged spirit, which, added to the enormous quantity of food they had eaten, soon plunged them all into a deep sleep.

The active plotters had been for some time employed in collecting many useful articles from the deserted waggon which had been rejected by the ladies as lumber,—hide ropes, straps, hooks, tools, and nails,

which, with cloaks and blankets, arms and ammunition, were arranged on the two remaining oxen. Dick groaned heavily as he took his last look at the useful waggon, the work of his own hands ; but to risk the removal of it with only two animals was absurd. Under the shadow of the waggon all the preparations were made, and before the brandy had been swallowed half an hour the fugitives set out. Hubert and Edmund were mounted on the least-loaded animal, and Mr. Pinchard, always an impediment to their progress, on the other.

After leaving the encampment they turned towards a thick wood, which lay at a little distance to the south. They entered this wood, in order that the track of the oxen might mislead pursuit. After proceeding a little way, they turned to the west, and forced their way through entangled bushes for about a hundred yards ; after which they emerged from the wood, and, taking an oblique direction, made towards the river, and at a few miles from the camp regained the track made the preceding day, which they carefully followed, being now lighted by the moon, and thus they hoped no trace would be left to guide their pursuers.

Their progress was as rapid as could be effected by the pedestrians ; and after travelling two or three hours, the two youths insisted on resigning their steed to Captain Stockport, and Mr. Pinchard was reluctantly dismounted, that Dr. Cameron might take his place. Thus they went on through the night, with no alarm, except from the occasional appearance of wild animals seeking the river ; but the number of the party seemed to create terror, and all kept at a satisfactory distance.

Morning found them weary in limb, but stout in heart ; they gave the poor cattle an hour's rest at a spot of rich pasturage, ate some of the buffalo-meat prepared the preceding evening, and while half the number watched, they alternately had half an hour's sleep ; then starting into action, they resumed their journey, observing, with satisfaction, that the new track was so mingled with the old, that only the strictest scrutiny could detect it.

They had not gone above twenty yards when they were startled by a cry behind them, and, however unwilling to do it, they made ready to shed blood to defend their own lives, and save the helpless females dependent on them. They halted, and turned round boldly to confront the foe. What was their astonishment to see only one man ; they awaited his approach ; he rushed up to Elliott, threw himself down on his face, and said, "I saw you leave, and I could not tell a lie to my great chief ; therefore I have followed you all night, and have come to be your slave."

Elliott saw that this man was the hunter whose life he had preserved, and found, upon inquiry, that he had not drunk the "fire," as he called it, which the other men had so much enjoyed. He had suspected the plan of the captives, had watched their departure, and, too grateful to betray his preserver, yet too conscientious to deceive his chief, and probably dreading also the punishment of negligence, he had followed their steps, in the hope of sharing their fortune.

It was the duty of the fugitives to protect the poor man ; so *Mayetta* was added to the establishment, and soon displayed his useful powers by bringing down an ourebi with his assegai, skinning, and cutting it up. Then satisfying his own hunger by feasting on the

intestines, he suspended the quarters on the hooks of the pack-saddles till they were needed, for it was only when absolute fatigue, or the heat of the sun, compelled them, that the party reluctantly rested, ate some food, and took a short sleep. They preferred to travel in the bright moonlight, rather than bivouac so near the river, where the wild beasts were always numerous at night.

With all their exertions, it was the evening of the third day before the travellers caught a view of the tall mimosa grove, where they hoped to meet their beloved friends; and languid, feeble, and footsore as they were, a ray of cheerfulness invigorated them to strain every nerve to reach the trysting-place.

But when they were still half a mile from the spot, to their great delight Mataban descended from a tree, where he had been looking out for them, ran to meet them, and evinced his joy by dancing round them, and uttering long speeches in his own language, with such remarkable volubility, that no one could understand him. They were satisfied, however, that all was well, and still more satisfied when he led from the wood the two oxen, regularly caparisoned, and invited the weary pedestrians to mount—an invitation gratefully accepted, while the courier ran forward to announce their approach.

They were received with tears of joy. All care for the future was forgotten in the present happiness. A circle of fires had already been prepared to light when darkness should bring the savage beasts abroad; while from a cooking-fire rose the savoury odour of stewed venison, which the weary travellers could not resist. The cattle were fed, and carefully secured within the circle, and then they ate their supper, and

almost forgot their perilous position in the enjoyment of ease and comfort.

But after supper the discussion of future plans disturbed their tranquillity. It seemed an aimless course to penetrate into the unknown regions of the north. To turn directly to the south would be to meet the very foes from whom they were flying. To return west, over the barren and dry karroo, on which they had so nearly perished, was not to be thought of; and to cross the broad, deep river which barred them from the east was impossible. On what should they decide?

"I do not feel inclined to relinquish my project of reaching some of the Portuguese settlements on the east coast," said Captain Stockport. "It appears probable that the river may be passable lower down. I propose that we should follow its northern course till we can cross it."

"Charming!" said Julia. "I have no doubt but we shall have to cross unexplored deserts, and to climb lofty mountains."

"I confess that I also rejoice in the opportunity," said Miss Keenmark. "I cannot help indulging in dreams of discovering the traces of ancient civilization. We might even meet with the ruins of cities which Asia, in her proud days, had planted here."

"My opinion is," said Mrs. Churchill, "that we should take the safest and most direct way to our own civilized home, and leave discoveries in the deserts to men suited for an undertaking which would be ridiculous in romantic girls and old women."

"But we have no such creatures in our community, Mrs. Churchill," answered Elliott; "and I cannot but admire the projects of our fair enthusiasts, though I do not concur in them; for I have an idea that we

may meet, in these unexplored regions, more dangerous enemies than those we have escaped from. Suppose we take the opinion of our dark allies."

Mayetta was consulted ; he held up his hands in horror at venturing with so small a force into the north, where, he said, the tribes lived on human flesh, and when unable to capture strangers, ate their own mothers and children.

This report Mataban confirmed with additional horrors ; and it was well that none of the females, except Miss Keenmark, understood the language of the natives well enough to comprehend all the frightful tales ; and though she shuddered, and did not press her plan of discovery again, she was prudent enough to be silent. Mayetta, moreover, expressed his conviction that though Nangasi might at first be deceived into the belief that his prisoners had fled to the south, yet, on failing to discover their track, he would divide his warriors into parties, and send them out in various directions, for he would be *mad* if the slaves he designed for his great master should escape. And when Mayetta described the horrors and barbarity of the court of the Lion King, Albert and Marshall, his hearers, trembled to think the slender and powerless party might yet fall into the hands of the savages.

It was finally agreed that they should travel down the banks of the river for a few days longer, in hopes of meeting with a place where they might be able to cross it, and thus mislead pursuit. Afterwards they might with more safety recross at a lower part ; and, if no danger threatened, try to make their way south.

If it had been possible to shake off the care and

anxiety that filled their hearts, the journey amidst the delicious scenery on the banks of the river would have been far from unpleasant. The females had become accustomed to ride the pack-oxen, which were led by the African men; and the sportsmen, who followed, amused themselves with shooting guinea-fowls with bows and arrows, or hunting deer with assegais, of which the natives had taught them the use. They were now more than ever careful to preserve all their cartridges; nor would they, on any account, have ventured a shot, the sound of which might have directed pursuit. Frequently Marshall would climb a tree, and with a good glass sweep the surrounding country; but still all continued solitary.

On the third day the banks of the river became more level, and the stream wider and shallower. They reached a spot where the wild animals had formed a path through the thicket and rushes to a drinking-place, and which seemed a favourable place for crossing, as the spoor of the giraffe and buffalo would render that of their own cattle undistinguishable. After a short consultation, all was arranged. The Africans led the pack-oxen over first with all the baggage, which was deposited without damage on the opposite bank, and as the water proved to be no more than four feet deep, the party were soon safely transported across. The ladies certainly felt a little trepidation; and Mr. Pinchard, with his usual timidity, begged to be abandoned rather than drowned; but he finally consented to go, mounted before John, who grumbled, as a Yorkshire groom might well grumble, "to think that he was druv' to ride atop of a clumsy bullock, with a poor crazed chap set on afore him!"

After a short rest, they reloaded and set out again, feeling more confidence from the hope that the river lay between their foes and them.

"Stay one moment," cried Edmund, as they moved along close by the margin of the river. "Do dismount, Miss Keenmark; I wish you to look at this new and strange creature."

"We may be very thankful the strange creature was not near us when we crossed the water," said Dr. Cameron, or our poor African grooms might have lost a leg in our service. It is an alligator or crocodile."

"Give me an assegai," cried Hubert. "I will send it into that frightful wide mouth."

But the creature, which had merely raised its hideous head above the water to gaze at the intruders, withdrew to its pursuit of the finny tribe, and Mrs. Churchill said,—

"Remember, Hubert, never to shed blood wantonly; for the support of life, or to defend life, we are allowed to destroy life; but you have no right to destroy the crocodile; leave the curious creature to the enemies its voracious habits will bring round it; but be careful to look round before you take a bath, for I fear the animal would show as little mercy as you proposed to do."

"I cannot understand, Dr. Cameron," said Edmund, "how the crocodile remains so long under water snapping at the fish, without rising to breathe."

"Because there is at the back of the throat a valve, which shuts out the water, but leaves the passage to the nostrils free," answered Dr. Cameron. "Thus; by keeping its nostrils above the surface, the animal is able to breathe, while with its huge open mouth, of which the tongue, short and fleshy, is im-

movably fixed to the lower jaw, it seizes its prey ; fish, beast, or man."

All the party were very cautious, after this adventure, in bathing in the river ; though the heat of the climate rendered frequent ablutions a luxury, and even a necessity. The banks of the river had now become open and bare, while at about half a mile distance from them a ridge of lofty mountains, running north-west, reared their crests, clothed at the base with thick woods, which offered a tempting shade from the fierce rays of the sun, which on the plains were scorching.

"If you please, captain," said Marshall, "if I might speak out, I think we're rather in fault to carry our sails in the open sea when the whole fleet of the enemy are bearing down upon us. And you see, sir, if we lay off the wood yonder, we could easily find a snug harbour at need."

"If possible, I have always been glad to sail with the wind, Mr. Marshall," replied the captain ; "but I know I have been sometimes wrong in this land voyage. Without a regular chart, one risks continually falling foul of rocks or sand-banks. In this matter I would give up the helm to Captain Elliott, who understands the country."

"Then, my good friend," said Elliott, "I pronounce Marshall to be right. By seeking the shade of the wood, we shall have shelter from the sun, and a ready retreat for the weak, if those black rascals should come after us. We will still keep the river in sight ; and if all appears safe, in a day or two we will certainly re-cross it, and turn our faces homeward."

To the great comfort of the whole party, Captain Stockport offered no objection, and they proceeded on

their way pleasantly under the shade of umbrageous forest trees, keeping a careful look-out towards the open country, and throwing many a startled glance into the thick wood on their right, from whence the chattering of the monkey, the *quak* of the hideous baboon, the deep growl of the leopard, and the hissing of the deadly serpent were constantly heard ; and while the prudent and timid turned all their thoughts to the long journey towards the south, the bold and adventurous cast many a longing look at the high mountains towering above the wood.

Before the decline of day, Elliott, the constituted authority, declared his belief that the enemy must have abandoned pursuit ; and as the river was so shallow at this place, that the most timid might ford it in safety, he proposed that they should cross it before night ; for, however pleasant the shade of the wood was by day, the sounds which issued from it betokened danger by night. The proposal was welcomed with acclamations, and the order of the march was arranged, while Marshall climbed a tree to take his last observation. But in a moment he descended, crying, "It is no time now to turn round, I see a large troop of dark figures ; they may be a mile distant, and we have still time to make a retreat ; but how can it be done ? See here !" pointing to the track of the cattle distinctly marked on the soft sandy soil.

For a few moments all were silent, lost in alarm or in reflection ; then Albert said, "Our first care must be to conceal the females and the baggage in the wood ; then I propose that we drive the oxen forward for some time, to continue the track beyond the place of our retreat. We might leave Abdalla and the Africans

to protect the helpless, and for ourselves, we must defend our lives as we can."

"We will think as we work," said Elliott. "Now, ladies, you will please to creep under the bushes in different places to penetrate the wood, and leave no *trail* for the rogues."

This was promptly and skilfully effected, while the stoutest hands were unlading the animals, and conveying the baggage to a considerable distance through the dense forest, and finally depositing it amidst some scattered rocks fallen from the mountain, which offered shelter and concealment.

Then leaving Mayetta concealed in a thick tree as sentinel, and the rest of the men engaged in obliterating every trace that might lead to the retreat, Albert, Charles, Elliott, and Marshall mounted the oxen, and urged them forward for some time in complete silence, till Charles suddenly cried out, "I have thought of a plan by which we may save ourselves, and perhaps one of the beasts. We will fasten thorny branches to the tails of three of the animals, which will thus be spurred to start off with a speed that will outstrip all pursuit by these fellows on foot, who will probably thus be led far astray. Then we may venture to take the other animal with us, and through the dense wood steal back to our anxious friends, after which I leave it to wiser heads to consider the future."

There was no time for discussion; the scheme was agreed on, branches were cut from the thorny mimosas, and tied securely behind the useful creatures, though their masters grieved at the necessity of the torturing experiment, and reluctantly drove their old friends from them with the whip; and no sooner

— THE XVIII. —

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Once more the tent was pitched, and couches prepared for rest; and taking advantage of the remaining daylight, they succeeded in filling up the opening of the rock with so much art that no trace of an entrance could be detected. No watch-fires were thought needful in this peaceful spot, and, after fervent devotions, they lay down in confidence that no wild animal could molest them.

But they had not slept long before piercing shrieks awoke the whole community. All sprung up in a moment, seizing spears, guns, or bows, as they fell in their way, and hastening towards the tent, from which the alarming cries, mingled with other strange sounds, issued, they threw open the entrance, and by the light of the moon beheld Angeline struggling to free her arm from the grasp of a huge baboon, which was grinning in the most hideous manner, and uttering a succession of discordant cries of "Quah ! quah !"

Numerous spear-wounds soon put the frightful creature to flight, bleeding profusely, and screaming furiously, while his cries were echoed by a troop of his friends perched on the rocks above, to which the wounded animal contrived to climb. A shower of arrows dispersed the troublesome vistsants ; but it was some time before tranquillity was restored to the affrighted inhabitants of the tent, and it was only after the promise that a regular watch should be kept, that they were induced to return to repose.

The troublesome animals had, however, got a fright, and did not again appear, and the bright morning sun chased alarm from all. A tour was made round the spacious enclosure to inspect it with more attention than they had been able to give before. The area was above a quarter of a mile in circumference, and

entirely surrounded by rocks, in which no cave or hollow existed where any dangerous creature could lurk.

Abundance of long grass promised provision for their solitary ox, and from the high mountains which rose at the back of the area a waterfall descended to the plain below, where it formed a narrow runlet along the base of the rocks for some little distance, and then disappeared through some invisible channel. This stream might probably fail in the season of drought ; but it now afforded a sufficient supply for every purpose, nor did the active Norah let the day pass before the grass was spread with newly-washed linen,—a rare luxury in the lives of the travellers.

But there was a necessity to search for food. Except some annoying insects, animal life seemed banished from their quiet little territory. Towards evening they saw on the mountain-heights a troop of the elegant and brilliantly-striped zebras peculiar to the mountains, and greatly superior to the quagga in grace of motion and splendour of colour. These beautiful creatures were careering on the upper ridges of the mountains with the swiftness of the wind, far beyond the reach of an arrow, even had the sportsmen been wanton enough to try the experiment ; besides, if they could even have killed and secured the animal, most of the party declared that not even hunger could induce them to eat a zebra.

At length it was proposed to send out a spy, and if all seemed quiet, that the hunters should venture forth to search for game. The stones were removed, and Mayetta returned to his post in the tree at the edge of the wood, and announcing that the coast was clear, Elliott, Charles, and Mataban set out, and were for-

fortunate enough, without wandering far from the wood, to kill a buffalo and a rheitbok.

On their return they found Dick with Marshall and John in the wood, cutting down trees to form a ladder. It had appeared, on inspection, that on the south side of the area the rock rose in the exact form of a wall about fifteen feet high, and not more than three feet across. Dick proposed that when they wished to leave their fortress, instead of displacing the stones that closed the entrance, they should pass over the wall of rock by means of a ladder, which he could easily make. Captain Stockport had at first objected to such a waste of nails ; but Dick had assured him, that if they could safely leave the retreat, he would undertake to extract and save the valuable nails.

Two straight and slender trees of the yew kind were cut down and drawn into the enclosure, the place from whence they had been removed being covered with stones, that it might not be discovered that the hand of man had been busy there.

Once provided with the material, Dick and his assistants soon made a ladder long enough for the purpose, leaving a pile of spare branches for fire-wood, if it should be needed.

After the animals had been skinned and cut up, and the flesh turned over to the cooks, the African men cleaned the skins, washing, rubbing them with wood ashes, and spreading them to dry ; after which the leather was to be softened by a preparation of fat. John then offered to make strong boots for all that needed them, as now every one must be prepared to walk the long journey that lay before them.

"But what will become of me, dear aunt?" said Maude, "for you know I have never been accustomed

to walk, and I believe the violent exercise would destroy me."

"Nevertheless it is inevitable," answered Mrs. Churchill. "You must learn to walk, Maude. Remember, that whatever man has done, man may do. My children were delicately reared; Miss Keenmark has never been strong; I am no longer young; yet, you see, we all walk, and even laugh at our torn shoes and bruised feet. We shall be greatly obliged to John if he will fit us with boots proper for our work."

"Which I never shall wear," cried Maude. "I never could wear leather boots, and boots made of that hard thick skin would certainly cripple me."

"Don't you be afeared, miss," said John; "I'll make you a canny, supple boot, and see if ye'll want to fling 'em off when ye come on yon stones."

The work was speedily commenced. Near the waterfall was a bed of clay, from which a quantity was brought, and an impression of the foot of each person taken. After this mould was hardened in the sun, it was lined with dry grass, and again filled with moist clay, which, after being a day or two exposed to the sun, was removed from the mould a complete last for the workman. In the mean time the leather was dry and fit for use; slender slips were cut from it for thread, awls were procured from Dick's treasure-chest, and John, with all the young men that would condescend to learn from him the useful art, commenced the business of shoemaking.

This employment, with cooking and drying meat, and repairing clothes, relieved the weariness of confinement, and three or four days passed tolerably well, the Africans especially benefiting by the intimate associa-

tion with their benevolent friends, who not only taught them useful arts, but implanted the seeds of true religion in their hearts, showing them the wondrous works and merciful promises of the one true God.

Once more they proposed to venture out on a hunting expedition, and Mayetta was appointed to make in the first place a careful inspection of the country. He had not been long in his observatory before his keen ear caught the sound of voices on the breeze, and he soon perceived a troop of men slowly approaching. On observing them with more attention, he saw that they were carefully marking the track made by the oxen, and he instantly concluded that they suspected, or had discovered, the deception practised on them. He descended with all speed, and returned to the rocks, remarking, with dismay, that passing to and fro he had left a visible track to the very spot of refuge. He mounted the ladder, drew it up, and descended to make his alarming report, announcing that the number of warriors appeared to be about fifty.

"If they were five hundred," said Elliott, "we could defend this pass against them; but, in order to have the ladies out of our way and out of danger, suppose we make a little inner fort in the remote corner at the base of the mountains."

This was agreed on; the baggage was removed to a niche or hollow in the high mountains behind the enclosure, and built round to form a small court, where the ladies would be out of sight, and safe from any stray assegai. To make it still more impenetrable, all the scattered branches left by the carpenters were heaped over the baggage; and to this last retreat

the women were requested to withdraw, while the brave little band drew up and arranged their plan of defence.

"If these determined warriors should succeed in forcing an entrance," said Julia, "must we certainly be carried into captivity? Could we not find some cave in which to hide, or some subterranean passage to the mountains? Do let us explore."

"Certainly there is no opening at the base of the rocks," said Mrs. Churchill; "I do observe, however, at a great height above us, a crack or gap in the mountains; but I fear we cannot reach it."

But Julia, undeterred by this difficulty, set out to obtain the ladder, which Marshall and John brought; and as it reached, though with difficulty, the hollow, Marshall mounted it to explore the cavity. He found it was not a cave, but a cleft or narrow pass, which wound like the dry bed of a river along the side of the mountain. He passed along this path for fifty yards, and believed that it might be possible to cross the mountains by this natural road without ascending to any greater height; at all events, this might, at the last extremity, afford an unobserved mode of escape, secure at least for some time, as the fugitives could draw up the ladder after them. He returned to communicate his observations and conclusions to the party below, to the great satisfaction of the distressed women; though Mr. Pinchard, as usual, moaned over the prospect of more rough wandering; and Hubert said, "Surely, gentlemen, you would not run away before we have had a shot at our black besiegers. If I had any hands in such a cowardly affair, I could never show my face in 'ours.'"

"I'll stand between you and Coventry in the mess-

room, Hubert," said Elliott. "Don't you see, my good fellow, we are placed to cover the retreat of the invalids and the baggage. We will do a little bit of fighting with the enemy when our hands are freed."

"And wouldn't it be advisable, Captain Elliott," observed Captain Stockport, "to shove over the lading, and lighten the vessel, that the decks may be cleared for action. Let the men hoist the cargo aloft."

"An excellent thought, my friend," said Dr. Cameron; "we have all property we would not willingly expose to spoliation, amongst which I reckon my valuable medicine-chest."

"And our carpet-bags, at least," said Maude.

"If we are really compelled to escape to the mountains," said Mrs. Churchill, "we cannot possibly carry away Vacco, our last useful animal; he must be abandoned to the savages. I would therefore propose that each of the party should select whatever is most valued, always remembering that it must be carried by the owner."

This arrangement was heard with many heavy sighs, though all agreed on the necessity of it; and each began to set aside absolute necessities, and darling luxuries, intended to be drawn up to the opening. The new leather boots were put on at once, and bundles or bags made up, in which each included a cup, knife, fork, and spoon. Abdalla undertook the charge of a kettle and some other cooking-utensils. Dick refused to part from his tool-chest. Marshall and John mounted the ladder, drew up the packages, to which, by general consent, were added the cover of the tent, compactly rolled up, and some blankets and cloaks. All these were arranged in a niche in the

upper mountain, to remain there, till necessity compelled the travellers to flee, or security enabled them to reclaim their property.

One whole day had been occupied in these preparations, and still no sound of alarm had disturbed the party, who were about to retire to the inclosed nook to take some refreshment with their fair friends, when Mayetta, hissing through his teeth, seized Captain Elliott's arm, and directing his attention to that part of the rock which they usually crossed by the ladder, he saw a dark face in the midst of a thick yew-tree, which grew close to the rock, and rose above it, and the moment after an assegai was hurled into the enclosure. It fortunately fell harmlessly, and before another could be thrown, Elliott's certain bullet struck the assailant, who cried out fearfully, and fell from the tree.

"It's all my fault, captain," said Dick. "Here's Master Edmund here has twice as much wit as me, and he wanted me sore to cut down that same tree, 'cause it was ower near to us; and like a fule as I was, I wadn't mell we't, seeing it was an auld tree, and a bit hollowed out like. If I'd nobbet filled it up wi' gunpowder, we might ha' blawn that chap up at ance."

"Is it too late to try that expedient?" said Albert. "It is certainly probable that their usual terror of fire-arms may prevent our enemies returning immediately; but we can never be secure for a moment while this mode of ascent remains for them. We shall be quite unable to carry away, without our beasts of burthen, the whole of Elliott's stock of powder; we might therefore afford to expend a pound or two in blowing up this tree."

This was an experiment of danger which Elliott would allow no one but himself to attempt. Mounting the rock by the ladder, he cautiously reconnoitred ; and no one appearing in sight, though he saw the smoke of a fire at the edge of the wood, he descended to the ground by means of the tree, in the lower part of which he found a convenient hollow, which he filled with powder. From this mine he carried a slow match of sufficient length to enable him to escape, and after lighting it, he rapidly returned to his friends.

The ladder was removed, and every one withdrew to the inclosed niche. A minute after, a tremendous explosion was heard and felt ; branches of the tree were hurled into the enclosure, and wild shrieks of agony were heard from the wood. Hence Albert concluded that the Africans had observed him, and had returned to the tree, to intercept his retreat.

The besieged now felt safe from any attack in the same quarter ; but the terror of the women, and the conviction of all, that if the pertinacious foe did not even find any vulnerable point in their fort, they would certainly starve them into capitulation, determined them to risk an immediate flight by the mountains. The knapsacks were therefore buckled on, and loading themselves with all the arms and ammunition they could carry, they took a sad leave of their valuable ox, which remained, however, wholly unconcerned at their departure, happy in the enjoyment of such ease and luxury as it had probably never before experienced in its life of labour.

"If we should pass this spot in our return to the south," said Margaret, "do promise, Captain Stockport, to stop and release poor Vacco from his prison."

"I hope, my little friend," answered he, "that we shall never see these woods again. My heart and wishes still point to the Indian Ocean."

"And mine to the colony," said Elliott, laughing; "and though necessity obliges us at present to flee towards the north, I still trust that before we fall into the jaws of the cannibals of whom Mayetta speaks, we may be able to turn our faces homeward, and 'over mountain, thorough forest,' win our way to civilized folks. But, at all events, I can assure my kind-hearted little Margaret, that we will not willingly return here, even for the merciful purpose of releasing Vacco. Moreover the animal is luxuriously provided for during its natural life, and in as little danger from enemies as any creature of its kind can reasonably expect to be. Now, ladies, Marshall is ready to receive you up yonder in the clouds; let me have the honour of handing you up the staircase."

By the light of the stars in that clear atmosphere, one after another ascended the ladder; Albert remained last, he looked carefully round, to see that nothing that might be useful had been left behind; then, following his friends, he assisted to draw up the ladder, after which they all felt perfectly convinced that the mode of their escape could not be suspected, nor was it probable that for some time the savages would even discover their absence from the enclosure.

The party could only move in single file along the narrow, deep, moat-like path; and were entirely concealed from observation by the lofty mountain-wall on one hand, and on the other by the rocky parapet which hid from their view the precipice below. When the rear-guard moved, Dick earnestly requested that the ladder should not be left behind. It was obviously a matter

of prudence to remove it to some distance from the entrance to the enclosure, and as it might be useful in scaling rocks, such of the party as were not overloaded lent a hand to bear that cumbrous fabric as far as their rugged road would permit them to do it.

It was with feelings of cheerful exultation that the young and active passed on the rude path in the silent midnight hour. The retreat they had left, especially after it was besieged, possessed the chilling melancholy of a prison, and they now seemed to tread with freedom ; the mountain air was pure, and even cool, for it was now July, the winter of South Africa ; yet, in that rich tropical region, the trees were in full foliage, and the flowers in bloom.

Folding their cloaks round them, to protect them from the night wind, the travellers walked onward, scarcely aware in what direction they proceeded,—sometimes obtaining a view over the parapet-rock of the dark abyss below, which made them shudder ; yet still safely moving along the natural pass, which, if not the dry bed of a river, was probably a cleft produced by some grand convulsion of nature, which had rent asunder the strong rock. So ardent was the desire to escape from the slavery that threatened them, that the morning light found the wanderers still dragging themselves onward, though now feebly and slowly.

At length they halted in a deep niche of the mountain, and ate, uncooked, some of the buffalo-meat they had fortunately dried a few days before. After this refreshment, they slept and watched alternately for some hours, then again set out, somewhat less briskly than before. The path, or ledge as it had now become, on which they walked, though winding to and fro in

a perplexing manner, promised to lead them to a wood which lay far below. Sometimes, however, they were delayed by the difficulties of the pass, narrow and encumbered with stones, which the strong and active men had to clear away before they assisted their weaker friends over the perilous path.

The shades of evening fell, and still the woods and plain were distant ; they had passed the mouth of more than one cavern ; but each looked so like the den of a lion or a rhinoceros, that they were not anxious to explore it. At length they were attracted by an opening ten or twelve feet above the path, in the perpendicular side of the mountain, and to Dick's great satisfaction, the ladder, which had been reluctantly dragged on for so many hours, was called into service. The path was, at this part, broad enough to admit the ladder to be firmly planted, and Albert, taking his rifle, ascended and cautiously entered the opening. He found it led into a spacious cave, on the roof of which a vast number of bats, suspended by their claws, appeared to be torpid. The sound of falling water was heard within the cave, and as it was impossible, at that height, it should be the abode of any dangerous beast, it promised to be a desirable shelter from the chill damps of night, and a refuge from savage beasts, and still more savage man. Albert summoned some active hands to aid him, the thorny shrubs which grew on the rocks supplied them with fuel, a fire immediately lighted soon roused the drowsy bats, which flew into some inner cave ; a part of the floor was then swept with the thorns, to cleanse it from the traces its late inhabitants had left, and the baggage was hoisted up with ropes. The ladies were then assisted in their ascent, and finally

the useful ladder was drawn up, to complete the security of their retreat.

Having now fresh water, they ventured to make a stew of buffalo-meat ; and when it was ready, each filled a cup from the kettle, and made a hearty supper. Even Maude forgot her fastidious scruples, and laughed with her young friends at this new phase of gipsy life. Julia declared that she enjoyed it exceedingly ; but Mr. Pinchard continued to murmur about the want of bread, till Mrs. Churchill sharply rebuked him.

“Man of sin,” said she, “how dare you thus deny the mercies of God. Have you forgotten the punishment of the discontented Israelites in the wilderness, who cried out to God for bread, till they drew upon them His wrathful judgment for their ingratitude ?”

Mr. Pinchard trembled before Mrs. Churchill’s reproofs ; he ate his supper in silence, and, as Elliott observed, he ate with a very good appetite for a man that did not like his bill of fare. Then after earnest thanksgiving and prayers, each took a blanket, selected a smooth spot for a couch, and slept the sleep of the weary and pure in heart.

But when they rested under the shade of a spreading mimosa, Marshall suggested that it would be prudent to fill every portable vessel they possessed with water, for there was every sign that before them lay the dry and barren karroo, where, though they would be safe from the wandering tribes, they must endure privations. The ladder was therefore reluctantly abandoned, after Dick had extracted a bag of nails from it, and cut three poles for the tent, which would be useful in the treeless region which they were approaching, and were not too cumbersome to be carried. Then a small cask was filled with water, slung on straps, and carried by two bearers; besides this, every one carried a bottle, a skin bucket, or some vessel of the precious water.

It was but too plain before evening that they were once more on the karroo; they had fortunately, during the day, encountered a herd of springboks on the road to a more fertile region, and a shower of arrows brought down two, which would be abundant provision for two days, and enable them to economize the dried buffalo-meat. The stream had entirely vanished in the sandy soil; but here and there they met with the broad umbrella-shaped camel-thorn, *Acacia giraffæ*, which, with abundance of dry grass, enabled them to make fires to protect them from the wild inhabitants of this dreary region; and they still preserved the tent, which sheltered the feeble from the burning sun of noon and the keen air of night.

They still continued to travel north next day, to escape from this barren and desolate wilderness, and toiled many miles without seeing any trace of water; not even a tree was now to be seen—nothing but a wide expanse, without a landmark on which to rest

the eye. As evening drew on, the timid shuddered to think that another day might exhaust the carefully-stored water, and leave them to perish in the wilderness ; but Mrs. Churchill rebuked their distrust, and with firmness and pious faith called on all to rely on Him who had never forsaken them.

As she finished speaking, Mayetta uttered an exclamation, and touched the arm of Elliott, pointing to the east. But Captain Elliott was not so keen-sighted as the African, and it was only by using Marshall's pocket-telescope that he perceived some objects moving at a very great distance. A party, well armed, set out on the chase ; but, long before they reached the spot, they discovered that these objects were only vultures engaged on some prey. An arrow sent amongst them dispersed the flock ; they rose with their usual heavy flight, but continued to hover over the spot even after their disturbers had reached it.

To their great horror, the party saw they had driven the birds from the body of a man lying on the earth, the face and arms entirely eaten away by the voracious creatures, while at a little distance lay the skeleton of a horse ; the flesh was all eaten by the birds also. The body of the man was dressed in the loose cotton blouse worn by Europeans in the East, and by his side were laid a large straw hat and some skin bags, which had been slung across the horse by leather straps.

Astonished and confounded, none could form any idea of the history of that solitary wanderer of the desert, and there was now but one duty of humanity left them to fulfil. With the spears which the Africans carried they turned up the light and sandy soil, and deep below the surface laid the body of the

stranger, having first removed from his girdle a book of Latin prayers, some papers written in Portuguese, a dagger, a brace of pistols, and some cigars,—of these things Albert took charge. Then they all knelt down round the unconsecrated grave, and Albert offered such pious prayers as the mournful event suggested to him. After this solemn duty, they collected a heap of the stones scattered over the soil, at once to mark the grave, and to protect the mangled corpse from further mutilation.

The bags were taken up and carried off by the Africans, and the little party, much affected, returned to recount the melancholy event to their friends, suppressing, however, the most painful details. The bags were found to contain rice, coffee, sugar, and salt ; but there was no water in the leather bottle, which was dry and shrivelled ; and to this privation they could not but suspect the unhappy man owed his death.

“Let us move on,” said Mrs. Churchill ; “it is not yet night, and every hour we spend on this waste is perilous. Thank God ! we are yet strong, and not without resources.”

As they pressed forward, speculating on this mournful event, Marshall, who could not be convinced that the victim was a solitary traveller, was sweeping the vast desert with his glass : “Surely, Mr. Beaumont,” said he, “I do see some dark object yonder away west. Look yourself, sir.”

Albert did look, and saw some object too ; and, weary as they were, he, with Charles and Elliott, Marshall and the faithful Africans, set out once more to explore. On approaching the object of their search, they again saw the vultures hovering, and dreaded to find more victims of the horrors of the desert. In

fact, they soon saw another form extended on the earth, clad in the dark blue bournouse worn by slaves. The man was lying on his face, and, on turning him over, they saw he was a negro, dead or insensible. Albert stooped down, and declared his opinion that the man breathed still : his mouth was open, and his parched tongue denoted the nature of his suffering. Marshall was of opinion that he was dying of thirst, and Charles fled back to the anxious caravan, and speedily returned with a bottle of water, followed more slowly by Dr. Cameron.

No one thought of economy at that moment ; water was dashed in the face of the unconscious negro, who revived almost immediately, and extended his dry tongue to catch the precious drops ; then, opening his eyes, he gazed with fear and wonder at his kind deliverers. A cup of water was then held to his lips, and eagerly swallowed. The powerful restorative was effectual ; he rose languidly from the earth, looked round with dismay, and uttered some words in a mixed dialect, which Marshall, the great linguist, immediately understood, being the common language of the coloured slaves in the Portuguese settlements of Eastern Africa.

When the man found he was understood, he anxiously inquired if his horse still lived. It lay near him in much the same state as that in which its master had been found, and was fortunately restored by the same means. After enjoying the small portion of water that could be spared for it, it struggled to its legs, and began to graze on the dry and withered grass of the karroo.

The whole party had now come up, and, as the rescued stranger was too feeble to be moved without food and repose, preparations were made for the night

encampment, and the slave, who informed them he was called Diego, was at once admitted into the community. He was fed with a little boiled rice, and Dr. Cameron, who pronounced that he had been the victim of the fever common at certain seasons in these regions, administered proper medicines; but he said that the rest of body and mind during his long sleep or insensibility had been favourable to the disorder, and that, notwithstanding his extreme weakness and emaciation, he might recover.

The next morning the good doctor was still more sanguine; he found the pulse of his patient subdued, his tongue and skin were moist, and he felt a great desire for food, which was cautiously administered to him. The horse had been fed the preceding evening with barley, which was contained in one of the bags slung over its back, and a small quantity of water had been spared for the poor animal, which was now fresh, and ready to start with the travellers. But Diego was still unable to sit up; therefore a sort of hammock was made from part of a roll of scarlet cloth, which had been found near the poor negro: this was nailed to two of the tent-poles, and thus a litter was made, on which the sick man was placed, and carried willingly by four bearers.

"See the good of my drawing them nails out, when we were forced to leave that *stee*," said Dick: "ye'll niver see me waste a nail, for there's nought ye cannot set about, if ye have nobbut nails and a hammer."

"And hands and a head, Dick," said Mrs. Churchill. "Truly our little community has not a more useful member than you are."

The baggage found near the negro, as well as the bags of the wretched stranger first discovered, were

placed on the horse; the former consisted of bags, chiefly filled with wheat, barley, and millet. The animal seemed much attached to its master, who treated it with great kindness, and appeared much rejoiced at its recovery. As the party moved slowly on their journey, Diego related to them his story in his own dialect, which was translated for the benefit of the unlearned by Marshall.

"I left Rio Janeiro," began he, "with my master, in a ship which came to a settlement on the coast, called Inhambane, where he joined a company of merchants who traded in ivory and slaves. Discontented with the supplies they received from the country, they were tempted by the offer of a chief or king, who visited the settlement, to accompany him to his kraal, which was far distant west, and to assist him in invading a neighbouring tribe, and capturing them as slaves.

"The merchants, four in number, set out with the chief, with twenty slave attendants, well armed and mounted, carrying provision for the journey, and beads, cotton, dungaree, scarlet cloth, wheat, rum, tobacco, and gunpowder, for the purpose of traffic. I was the particular attendant on my master, and subjected to all his caprices. For many days our journey was pleasant, and we found game and water in plenty. Then we arrived at a barren desert, or karroo, as the chief called it, and which it was necessary to cross before we reached his kraal; but he guided us to particular spots where water was found in muddy basins or fountains, and we still felt no privation.

"But the second day on the karroo a disease broke out among the horses, and in twenty-four hours half of them were dead, or left dying. Then our progress was slow and tedious, and our jealous masters feared

to lose sight of us, lest we should attempt to escape in this wide desert. The third evening, when we reached the fountain, three of the slaves were prostrated with fever, and unable to move ; before morning they were raving in delirium, and in that state were abandoned to perish alone by their hard masters.

“But judgment quickly followed ; three of the merchants, one after another, were attacked with fever : knowing their fearful fate, they desired to return ; the chief remonstrated with them, and assured them that in three days more he would bring them into the fertile and healthy region where his kraal was situated, and where sickness was unknown. They still persisted in turning to the east ; but it was too late ; unable to sit on their horses, they were supported by their slaves, till, with difficulty, we reached a fountain, where we remained two days, and buried the three men who sought riches, and found a grave.

“Then the chief and my sordid master conferred long together, and decided on sharing the property of the dead, and executing their original plan. The chief agreed to sell to my master two hundred slaves, with sufficient provision to supply them on their return to the coast. I had been baptized a Christian, and had been instructed in my youth by a kind and good mistress. I knew my master was committing a sin, and perilling his soul, and I feared that some heavy judgment would fall upon us. When we reached the next muddy fountain to rest for the night, I crept behind the tethered horses, and knelt down to say my prayers, hoping that God would hear me, though I was among the wicked. My master found me kneeling, and lashed me for idleness ; but still I believed that God was watching me, and I bore my punishment bravely.

"The chief pointed out to my master the spoor of wild animals at the fountain, and, as we had no fuel for fires, and the horses would be in danger, we were ordered to watch while our masters slept. But before we could make any arrangements, we heard the deep roar of a lion close at hand. The moon had not risen, and all was so obscure that we could not even see our enemy ; we hastily ran to collect our arms, and the chief stepped forward to obtain his musket, which was hung to his saddle, and instantly fired it at random in the direction from which the roaring proceeded.

"In all probability the animal had been wounded by the shot, for, with a terrific roar, he sprang into the midst of us, and seizing the chief, who was in the front, by the legs, he dragged him away. We heard his cries for help ; but lost some time in our terror, confusion, and dread lest our shots might slay the victim instead of the enemy. But convinced that, should we longer delay, the death of the man would be certain, we sent a shower of shots and assegais after the lion. We neither heard nor saw him more ; a horrible silence succeeded, and we were convinced the monster was devouring his prey. Our solitary consolation was, that, sated with his repast, we need have no fear of another visit that night.

"My master was mad with vexation and disappointment ; after all his expense, anxiety, and suffering, to return without his booty was more than he could endure. He insisted on prosecuting the plan as first arranged ; the chief had instructed him fully in the mode of action ; we were now within two days' journey of the kraal, and he vowed he would reach it. Then, ordering a strict watch to be kept, he bound the bridle of his horse round his arm, and lay down

to sleep. As the overlooker of the slaves, I was privileged to follow his example ; and the trembling watch were left in the dark to talk over the tragedy of the evening.

"I woke at the first ray of light, and looked round in wonder, for I did not hear the usual chattering of the slaves. I rose, and saw, to my dismay, that my master and I were alone : slaves, horses, and all the valuable goods intended for the purchase of slaves, had disappeared :—all was gone, save our horses and their lading, and a large web of cloth, which formed the tent and the bed of my master. In fear and trembling I awoke him, and never shall I forget his frenzy, his wicked imprecations, and his oaths of vengeance. I believe he would have destroyed me on the spot, but my assistance was absolutely necessary to him ; nor did he dare to inflict on me more than a few lashes, when he saw the determination that flashed from my eyes.

"Now, when the object of his ardent desire was comparatively near, instead of following the road pointed out by the chief, he set out, in the madness of his revenge, to pursue the slaves, whose track, deeply marked in the sandy soil, was due south. His rage was so great that I did not dare to suggest to him the peril of this undertaking, but followed him unwillingly and painfully, for the fatal burning in my temples announced to me my approaching illness. We reached a spot where the fugitives had obviously separated, and proceeded in different directions, probably to confound their pursuers. With terrible oaths, my master paused, and I then saw, by the dark colour of his face and his wild eyes, that he too was to be a victim to the fever.

"In hollow tone, yet still continuing his fearful

imprecations, he commanded me to follow him in a direction to the east ; but in the very act of turning round, I fell from my horse, incapable of further efforts. He stormed furiously, and lashed me in vain, for I became insensible, and never saw him more. At intervals I revived, or, as it seemed to me, awoke from painful dreams of the bright fountains and orange-groves of my native home, which I saw before me, but could not approach.

“ Once, I was conscious of the vultures hovering above me, and turned over on my face to save myself from their fierce attacks. I think I saw the sun rise twice as I lay in this state ; then I slept again, and once more I saw the fountains, and felt the blessed drops fall on my burning brow ; and I opened my eyes to see strangers around me, who had human feeling for the poor slave.”

Diego told his story at intervals, for Dr. Cameron forbade him to exhaust himself by exertion ; but even under the burning sun, and over the dreary karroo, he seemed to gather strength and cheerfulness ; and with tears of gratitude he thanked the kind girls who shaded his head with their large umbrellas, and tried to converse with him. Before evening he was made to comprehend the position and the difficulties of the travellers ; and he counselled them to proceed north till they had crossed the karroo, the miseries of which he had experienced, and then to proceed west ; for he had learnt from the African chief that a more fertile region lay in that direction by which they might return. Again the party bivouacked on the dreary waste, with a scanty supply of water, of which the suffering man and beast were allowed double shares. Still they were resigned,

if not cheerful, and thanked God for their daily preservation ; and Diego, with admiration and deep feeling, appeared to unite with them in their devotions in an unknown tongue.

“ All this is very beautiful to me,” said he to Albert in Portuguese, which language he could speak fluently ; “ for my beloved mistress, even from my infancy, taught me with her own children, though I was dark, and they were fair. When I was old enough, I was given to my young playfellow, Senhor Alfonso, who had large coffee-plantations, and many slaves, to whom he was very kind ; I was the overlooker, and he called me his friend.

“ But when his father joined some merchants in this fatal expedition to Africa, he demanded me from his son, to accompany him on his voyage, to manage his slaves, and keep his accounts. My dear young master reluctantly parted with me to his tyrannical father ; and I now pray God that I may live to return to him ; though I shall be the bearer of evil tidings.”

Albert had told Diego the fate of his master, who was identified by the papers brought away from the body. He also wished the slave to take an account of all the provision, that it might be scrupulously paid for if the party ever reached a port. But Diego insisted that all the provision was the property of his benefactors, and that the ladies should have the remainder of the cloth of which his litter had been made to carpet their tent. This suggestion was not to be despised, and the large roll of bright-coloured cloth, forty or fifty yards in length, was serviceably employed for carpets and coverings. And in spite of scorching days and chilly nights, the whole party continued to be blessed with health.

CHAPTER XX.

The suffering of Drought. The Mountain Range. Alarming Signs. The Flight by Night. The Rocky Tower. The Signal of the Enemy. The Voice from the Clouds. Scaling the Mountain. A Paradise in the Regions of the Air.

RESIGNED as they were to their privations, the next day the travellers cast many an anxious glance round; for one quart-bottle of water was all that was left to be divided at night, and an unusual silence rendered their progress less cheerful than usual. At length Margaret said, "Mr. Beaumont, I do think there is some change in the appearance of this dreary wilderness. To-day our path is more rough and stony than it was yesterday. See! even the keen-eyed savages could hardly discover our track."

"You are quite right, Margaret, and I augur much good from these appearances," said Albert, as he took a survey of the country through the useful glass, and after a long gaze, declared that he saw a line of mountains at the east.

"Capital!" cried Charles; "then we may, after all, reach the Mountains of the Moon."

"I think, young gentlemen," said Miss Keenmark, "that all travellers agree in the existence of one great chain of mountains, broken at intervals, which runs down the east of Africa. That part which lies in the equatorial regions, and which has never been accurately surveyed, has been named by ancient geographers *Lunæ Montes*. To this unknown and remote region, however interesting the expedition might be, we cannot hope to attain."

"It would be a blessing to us, however, madam," said Marshall, "if we could come near the mountains, whatever their names may be ; for then we might make sure of water to drink, and a shelter from the hot sun, which is setting my brains on fire through the rents in my old hat."

"Come under my umbrella, dear Mr. Marshall," cried Julia. "And do let me have your hat to mend, when we stop to rest," said Margaret.

"And isn't there the bread-basket on my arm?" said Norah ; "which same is not useful now, by reason of wanting the bread, musha ! and wouldn't it make an illegant caubeen, now ?"

The bread-basket, as Norah named it, was a rude attempt at the useful arts, accomplished in the rainy season, quite as much like an umbrella as a basket ; it was well adapted to the purpose Norah proposed, and the amusement of seeing Marshall wear Norah's bread-basket on his head was not without its good effect on the depressed wanderers. Another weary hour's progress, and the mountains were visible to the naked eye, though still at too great a distance to be reached before night ; but among the scattered stones and long grass, a few stunted shrubs might now be seen. Still water was not to be found, and rest was absolutely necessary, so selecting a spot near a clump of bushes, which enabled them to make a fire to protect them as well from the blood-thirsty insects, as from the more dangerous animals, they ate their supper, and carefully portioned out the last drop of water, of which the poor horse had his due share. Then, too weary to converse, they prayed with tearful eyes but trusting hearts, and sought repose.

In the cool of the morning they set out, unable to

eat, or scarcely to speak, from the parched state of their mouths. Their wishes flew rapidly towards the wood-covered mountains, while their feeble steps grew slower and slower. Though the grass that sprung amongst the stones looked greener and fresher, no water could be found. Diego's heavy eye grew dim, Maude tottered as she walked, the African children wept aloud, and even the strongest became feeble. At length they sank down beneath a tree which afforded some shade, and which Miss Keenmark, feeble as she was, murmured out was *Bombax pentandrum*, then the ladies declared their utter inability to move farther.

"We niver can stand this, master," said John, whimpering at the sight of such distress. "What d'ye think, sir, if Mr. Marshall and I were just to set off, wi' owther on us a bucket, away to yon hills, for Mr. Marshall tells, there's whiles bits o' becks runs down them."

Albert reluctantly permitted the two faithful fellows to depart on this expedition without him, for he felt quite unequal to the exertion. Mayetta, however, who was more accustomed to privation, took up a bucket and followed them.

The woods appeared about half a mile from their resting-place ; and, though the time seemed very long, it was not more than three-quarters of an hour before the welcome sight of the returning messengers, evidently loaded, roused the feeble party to energy and hope. No words were spoken till each had drunk a cup of water ; then they were able to eat some meat ; and, while John was feeding and watering the horse, Marshall explained that, after reaching the woods, they wandered along the side till the welcome murmur

summoned them to a clear rill, which wound through the trees at the foot of the rocks.

"But, I'se tell ye, master," said John, "that wood's not a place to get a good safe sleep in, for it smells so like Wombwell's shows, that you might fancy you were at our fair, and I'll be bound swarms with tigers and bears, and such like."

"Not tigers and bears, John!" exclaimed Miss Keenmark; "that is a zoological impossibility. Of the feline race, we may possibly encounter the lion or the leopard; of the *Ursidae*, I believe, none exist in Africa."

"They're all as one, miss," answered John, "ready to snap up a fellow that comes in their way; and I s'uld say, keep outside yon wood at nights."

"And you would speak very wisely, John," said Elliott. "We must, however, be a little nearer to our tap, and then, my good fellow, we will fill our casks by day, and give the lions a wide berth when night draws on."

Revived and refreshed, the party moved forward to within fifty yards of the wood, selected the shade of a cotton-tree for their encampment, fastened the horse with a long rein to the tree, allowing him to feed on the fresh grass, then collected fuel, and made up fires for the night. Once more they enjoyed the pleasant refreshment of coffee, so long unknown to them; privations were forgotten, and hope broke brightly out again, while various plans were discussed, all leading to that haven of home which they pined for.

Captain Stockport had obtained much information from Diego of the nature of the country which lay between them and the coast. He allowed that European vessels, which were not slavers, sometimes

touched at the port of Inhambane, from whence he had come ; but the distance to this port was very great, and he feared, without carriages, the women could never reach it, unless they could cross the mountains, and fall upon some large river, on which they could embark in a canoe, and descend to its mouth.

This brilliant idea charmed Captain Stockport and many of the weary-footed. Captain Elliott still desired to recover his old track, and proceed direct to the colony ; and he was supported by the natives, who shrunk with horror at the chance of encountering the *Hollontontes*, as they called the tribes to the east of the mountains.

In the end, they set out next morning to travel for another day to the north, and proceeded through scenery growing at every footstep more rich and beautiful. The soft green turf was covered with gorgeous flowers, even in the winter of the year ; the tall trees threw their grateful shade over the travellers, while chattering parrots and monkeys, and gabbling guinea-fowls, formed a concert by no means inharmonious, after the silence of the dreary karroo. Walking was no longer a fatigue to the young and active ; and even Diego sometimes joined them, when the good-natured bearers insisted on placing one of the fatigued party,—Maude, Mrs. Churchill, or Miss Keenmark, in the palanquin, as Julia named the litter.

Again game became plentiful, and the sportsmen left them sometimes to chase an antelope. Towards evening they returned from one of these expeditions bearing a fine ourebi ; but Mrs. Churchill perceived a serious gloom on the countenance of Albert which boded evil.

"Speak out, Albert," said she ; "we are no longer weak and timid, What have you seen ? What have we to fear in this garden of Eden ?"

"It is best to tell the truth, my dear Mrs. Churchill," answered he. "We have seen the unmistakable trace of the savage,—the lately-extinguished fire,—the remnants of a bloody feast !"

This was more terrible than even the parched desert or the furious beast. They could only hope these wild natives had merely crossed their path, and might have passed forward in a different direction. Still fear haunted and disturbed their sleep, and before dawn they were on the road to escape from a neighbourhood where they had been alarmed by such a startling spectacle. As they went forward, the active young men separated, and searched on every side for the trail of their enemies, but could not discover it. The mountains gradually became lower as they proceeded, and were entirely covered with trees, forming a thick and impassable forest ; before long they heard the sound of water, and, finally, they reached the shores of a broad river, which flowed towards the east, over the now level plain, for the mountain-range was broken.

Nothing could be more lovely than the banks of the river, overhung with graceful willows, the bright flowers delighted the eye, and the moving waters gave a freshness to the air ; and wherever a break in the rocky bed of the stream had allowed the water to form a pool, the lovely blue water-lily afforded great interest to Miss Keenmark and her pupils.

"We must remember," said Albert, "however charming the shores of an African river may appear, there is always danger lurking near them. There the

fierce lion, the malignant buffalo, the wild rhinoceros, and the gigantic elephant will resort to drink ; there hides the crafty crocodile ; and there the ferocious and powerful savage tribes fix their kraals, and hunt indiscriminately man and beast."

The travellers felt with uneasiness their perilous situation, and more than once Mayetta pointed out to Elliott spoor which was not that of any animal, the head of an arrow, or the broken shaft of a spear—undoubted tokens of the visits of warriors. When they encamped for the night, they deferred making fires till darkness should render the measure indispensable. They ate some cold meat, and sat almost in silence beneath a spreading mimosa, till night really came on ; and preparations were made to light the fires for the necessary protection from animals.

"Let us rather go forward during the night, and rest in the day," said Mrs. Churchill, "than risk holding out a signal to the enemy."

But even while she spoke, a general exclamation was uttered, for at a great distance, in the west, a smoke was seen rising, very perceptible in the clear starlight night.

"They are travelling in a line parallel to us," said Elliott. "God send they may not diverge from their course, and we will take care not to turn aside to shake hands with them ; for I make no doubt they are some of Mayetta's man-eaters."

"As it would now be madness to light a fire," said Albert, "I propose, as Mrs. Churchill suggested, that we should pursue our way beneath this clear sky, and endeavour to find some hiding-place, where we may retire till these dangerous neighbours pass on before us ; after which we must decidedly take a new route."

With trembling hearts they moved forward ; the

moon was risen, and sparkling on the water, directed their course along the banks of the river ; the Africans, at their own request, preceding the party, to sound the earth with the tent-poles, lest they should fall upon some pit dug for the elephant or the hippopotamus. As the morning slowly broke, they looked round to discover a place of refuge. On their right hand flowed the river, backed by a dark forest ; at the left, wide and fertile plains scattered with lofty trees, and covered with rich pasturage, on which numerous herds of animals were grazing.

In the distance before them a dark outline seemed to indicate mountains, amongst which they hoped to find some shelter ; but all the wanderers were equally worn out before they arrived near enough to discover that the dark object they had taken for mountains was really one exceedingly high isolated square rock. Around the base grew low brushwood, above which rose the solid, bare, perpendicular rock, to all appearance inaccessible. At this spot it was absolutely necessary that they should rest ; but the hope of shelter seemed vain ; they walked round the huge mass, but on every side nothing but the flat and unbroken face of the rock presented itself.

"It surely must be the remains of the Tower of Babel !" exclaimed Julia. "Is it not very like it, Miss Keenmark ?"

"By no means, Julia," replied she. "Your conclusions are ever too hasty. You must remember that the Tower of Babel stood on the plains of Shinar, in Babylonia, doubtless on the west side of the great river Euphrates. That tower was the work of presumptuous man : this wonderful rock is the creation of Almighty God himself."

"It is truly a marvellous freak of nature," said Dr. Cameron, "to sever this solitary mountain from the chain to which it seems to belong. From our observations in walking round, I should judge each side of the square must measure at least three hundred yards. And, as we can unfortunately find no cave or fissure to afford us concealment, we must of necessity encamp at the side of the solid rock, which, at all events, will protect us in the rear."

They looked up wistfully at the dark bare rock, which appeared to rise to the very clouds, and with sorrowful hearts and aching limbs reclined on the soft turf, drank of the clear waters of the river, which was not more than twenty yards from the mountain, and ate, as a duty, without appetite or enjoyment.

"What next?" asked Charles. "Certainly, we must not remain here."

"Do not be in such haste, Charles," said Julia. "There is a certain fascination about this rock. I feel as if it was connected with our fate, and that we ought not to leave it."

"I know what Julia has in her head," said Hubert. "She fancies the valley of diamonds lies hidden in this mountain, and if the roc would but appear, she would doubtless submit to be tied to its leg, that she might get a peep at that wonderful region, and pick up a small fortune."

"But have you any reason for believing there are diamonds in these mountains, Mr. Seyton?" asked Mr. Pinchard.

"Certainly there are not, sir," said Mrs. Churchill; "nor if they did exist could they possibly be of use to wretched wanderers, the extent of whose desire is a peaceful retreat, to escape from slavery or death."

"I am certainly reluctant to encourage the volatile imagination of my dear Julia," said Miss Keenmark; "yet I am also persuaded that God has led us to this strange spot for some merciful purpose."

At this moment, the fatal signal of the presence of their enemies—the smoke of their fire—was again seen within a quarter of a mile of their resting-place, and escape seemed hopeless. The men seized their weapons; the women, even the ignorant Africans, knelt down to pray for the only help that could avail them; while Mr. Pinchard wept aloud, and Angeline burst out, as usual, into hysterical cries.

Alarmed at the consequence of this imprudence, Mrs. Churchill started forward to silence the weak woman, when she was suddenly arrested by the sound of a voice which seemed to proceed from the clouds, saying, "Who are you?"

For a moment the deep silence of astonishment and terror prevailed. Then Albert recovered his presence of mind, and in a clear, distinct voice, cried out,—
"We are unfortunate Christian travellers, lost in the wilds, with a savage foe in sight, and no shelter or hope of escape. Can you, who speak our language, point out to us a place of refuge?"

A moment's silence followed, then some object appeared to be crawling rapidly down the mountain-side. This proved to be a strong rope-ladder, to the end of which two forked and pointed stakes were attached. As soon as it touched the ground, the voice from above said, "Lose no time; secure the ladder to the ground, and let *one* person only ascend."

Every one turned to Albert, who, as soon as the ladder was fixed, sprung up it, and remarked, as he ascended, that it was formed of strong cables made

of the entrails of wild animals twisted, and must have been a work of great labour. When about half-way up the ascent, he found strong short wooden poles firmly inserted in the crevices of the rock at intervals, alternately on the right and on the left side, which served at once to keep the ladder from swerving, and to afford a resting for the hands in the long ascent. As he approached the summit, it appeared to him to be covered with trees, except the small opening from which the ladder descended.

With an anxious heart he reached the end of his expedition, and saw before him a tall venerable man, in a long loose robe, with white hair and beard, who extended his hand, and drew his visitor upon the solid rock. Then passing through the trees, which merely formed a belt round the table-rock, they came upon a scene of park-like beauty. Albert did not, however, pause to examine this new world; but briefly and rapidly sketched the position and the alarm of the party below, and besought assistance.

"I am a solitary in the midst of abundance," said the stranger, "and I shall gladly welcome and shelter you all."

"Solitary!" thought Albert, in astonishment, as he looked at the works of labour around him. How could one person alone turn the rude machinery by which the ladder was raised; it was merely a rough pole resting on two forked props; one end of the pole was crooked, and by laboriously winding this round, the ladder had to be drawn up: no wonder the solitary should be glad of companions!

Without more delay, Albert called out that Dick should ascend first, bringing his tool-chest, to be followed by John bearing the cable-ropes they had still

preserved from the ship-stores. Then, while they were ascending, he glanced around at the paradise before him. The area was dotted over with a variety of beautiful though low trees; it sloped down gradually to the midst, where a clear tiny lake, supplied by two channels that trickled down the descent, sparkled beneath the beams of the rising moon.

The slope appeared to be in some parts formed into cultivated terraces, on the lowest ledge of one of these stood a long low hut, thatched with leaves. Near this, a portion of rich pasture, fenced with bushes, contained a flock of goats, while innumerable birds covered the trees, and, in their various tongues, seemed to be conversing on this remarkable event of their lives.

The stranger smiled at Albert's silent astonishment, and said, "I must have died in my bereavement and solitude, if God had not given me work to do, and these companions."

At this moment, Dick's round black head and wondering eyes appeared above the rock, and he was no sooner landed than Albert pointed out the windlass, and asked him if he could not fix a better handle to work it.

"Lord help ye, sir!" said Dick to the stranger, "but ye are badly off for carpenters in this queer country. I'se soon fettle ye up a bit of a hannel."

Dick had his tools out in a minute, and from a heap of dry wood which lay near, he selected a piece fit for his purpose, nor did he stop even to look round at the strange land he had reached; but proceeded to complete a more serviceable handle for the rude windlass. John in the mean time had arrived with the large coil of rope, which Albert had conceived might

be useful in hoisting up the baggage; however, the solitary showed him a rope which he had himself twisted from the entrails of animals with great labour, and which was of sufficient length to reach the ground; this he proposed to lower, to bring up the property of his guests.

Albert then descended to communicate his good tidings, and to arrange the order of the upward march. No time could be spent in words; Mrs. Churchill courageously undertook to lead the way, and, after many instructions from Albert, steadily and slowly ascended. Miss Keenmark followed; then Charles, who was light, went up behind Maude, to steady her trembling steps; Margaret and Julia disdained assistance, and tripped upwards with active and certain step; and Angeline, recovered from her hysterics, and finding there was no help for the matter, accomplished her passage tolerably well. But Norah was pale and agitated, being impressed with the idea that something supernatural must exist in the higher region. When she reached the end of her journey, Charles held out his hand to assist her, saying, "Now, Norah, hould on, like Daniel O'Rourke, and just step out into the moon. See, here is the man in the moon coming to meet you."

"Oh, wisha! Mr. Charles," cried she; "and will it be raal, then? Spake to me, Miss Margaret, mavourneen, and will it be thruly the moon itself, this same?"

Margaret kindly soothed the fears of her good nurse; and Julia said, "Indeed, Charles, I feel as much bewildered as Norah. I cannot but fancy that we are at leugh cast upon a charming island, surrounded by an aerial ocean separated entirely from the lower world."

One after another the rest of the party ascended. Diego's horse was stripped of its baggage and harness, for it must necessarily be left below. It was first proposed to tie it by a long rope to a tree in an adjacent wood ; but Elliott declared that this would be to offer it up a helpless sacrifice to the ravenous beasts of the forests ; while, if set free, it might possibly escape. Diego therefore fed it, for the last time, with a little barley, and caressing it fondly, turned it loose. The animal stood some minutes in a state of doubt, and then, in a dignified manner, moved on to join its distant cousins, the quaggas, which were grazing on the plain. Its master anxiously watched its reception, which was cool and indifferent ; but as it began to graze amongst them with great composure, it was plain that it was admitted into society, and he felt comforted.

Few of the party had ascended without some bag or knapsack on his back ; the tent, poles, and heavy baggage had yet to be sent up, but with the iron hooks of the pack-saddles attached to the ropes, all were drawn up successfully by means of Dick's improved windlass. Albert ascended lastly, after he had seen all safely moved ; then, when danger was past, Mrs. Churchill said, " Good and venerable man, we call on you to offer thanks in our name to Him who alone was able to save us in our great peril."

" Most gladly, my dear madam," answered the recluse, " will I resume the duties of my sacred office, for years abandoned, or performed rather with the lips than the heart."

The good man then preceded them slowly, for they saw he halted in his walk, to a kind of arbour beneath a spreading fig-tree, on which the young leaves of spring were bursting amidst the undecayed foliage of

the past year, while around the tall poles which formed the sides, creeping plants were gracefully twined.

"This has been my oratory, my friends," said he ; "how gladly I shall now make it my church ! and, though not consecrated by sacred rites, yet we are told that the presence of God makes every spot holy ; and where two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is surely present."

On a piece of rock in this sanctuary were placed the holy books, and here the venerable solitary and his kneeling congregation offered up their thanks for the signal preservation.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Happy Island. The fruitless Invasion. The Fiery Serpent. Mr. Grey's Story. Journey from the Cape. The Missionary Settlement. The Massacre. The Death of Jan. The Savage and the Elephant. A Flight. The Enchanted Castle.

AFTER prayers, the travellers surveyed with interest the lovely scene around them. The hut of the solitary stood on a terrace, leaning against a still higher terrace, and on each side of it was a garden planted on one side with the shrubs and pretty flowers of Europe, of which the wall-flower and primrose were now in bloom. The garden at the other end was cultivated for use ; cabbages, potatoes, pease, beans, and other vegetables were coming forward, or already fit for use ; and the boundary was a rocky channel, through which a clear tiny stream trickled to the lake below.

"This stream is convenient for irrigating my garden," said the stranger ; "for the dry climate and the rocky soil require art to aid nature. Now, ladies, who will assist an old lame man to perform the duties of hospitality ?"

They entered the large unfurnished hut, which contained only a table, formed of woven branches of willow, resting on four low posts fixed in the ground ; a single seat near it was of the same fabric, two or three knives, a rudely carved wooden spoon, some ostrich-shell bowls, one of which was filled with milk, another with thin cakes of coarse flour, and a third with dried plums, were standing on the table.

"This appears a selfish arrangement," said the

stranger ; " but I could not expect, and had forgotten to hope for society. If you will lighten my solitude for a season, we must contrive to improve our accommodation. Now, let me see you partake of my simple viands, while I go to bring water and more milk."

But their host, whose name they learnt was Grey, was not allowed by his young guests to bring water ; and having pointed out an adjoining shed as his cooking-place, Norah and Abdalla installed themselves in it ; lighted a fire, boiled a kettle of water, and made coffee, to the great admiration of Mr. Grey, who told them that in his five years of solitude he had never possessed pot or kettle.

The coffee, with milk, and the maize-cakes, were pronounced delicious ; and though the cups of silver, tin, and shell, were insufficient for so large a party, they were filled for all in turn, and the party grew absolutely merry over their unusual potations. Then every hand was called out, the tent was pitched on the lawn before the hut, and all was unpacked and arranged for the night accommodation. Albert and Marshall, before they retired, took a last look below at the fires of the wanderers on the plain, and the blaze showed many dark forms gathered round, and with thankful hearts they hailed their secure position.

Pleasant and perfect was the repose of the tired wanderers, and pleasanter still it was to spring up at early dawn, without the prospect of the daily pilgrimage to which they had so long been accustomed. It was pleasant to have abundant water for ablutions, which they had rarely enjoyed, and it was very pleasant to " explore the island," as Julia said, and to contemplate with wonder and curiosity this great natural phenomenon.

The whole party were soon assembled together, and Mr. Grey told them that when he first "alighted" on this singular spot, he found it little better than a wild, luxuriantly-pastured basin. He had by great labour formed it into terraces, and, providentially, had the means of cultivating it.

"There is no doubt," said Miss Keenmark, "that the isolation of this singular mountain must be attributed to some vast convulsion of nature. It bears the trace of volcanic action, and the form of this table-land marks it to be an exhausted crater."

"In that case," said Mr. Pinchard, "we are in a most dangerous situation, for the volcano may burst out again any day."

"There is no spot on earth where man may dare to say he is perfectly secure from evil," said Mr. Grey; "such is the penalty of sin. The earth may at any moment open beneath your feet; the bolt of heaven may fall on your head; the friendly elements may become your destroyer. Death comes in many forms besides 'the arrow that flieth by day, and the sickness that destroyeth at noon.' Remember this, my son, and live from day to day in the thought that 'this night thy soul may be required of thee.'"

Following Mr. Grey round, he pointed out to them how greatly he had thinned the natural thicket which bordered the rock, and had extended many yards over the plain. From the superabundance he obtained fences and fuel, and they now approached the opening which he had entirely cleared to admit his ladder, and were startled to hear the sound of voices below.

"Fear not," said Mr. Grey; "let some one approach who can understand the language of these wild wanderers, that we may learn what they are about."

The Africans came forward to listen ; Mayetta perfectly understood the language, which was Sichuana, as spoken by his own tribe, and he readily interpreted it. It appeared that the savages had detected and followed the track of the travellers, and discovered that it terminated at this spot. They were now inspecting the mountain, but at a cautious distance, for they spoke of it as the abode of Isselator, the evil spirit, who would strike them dead if they touched it.

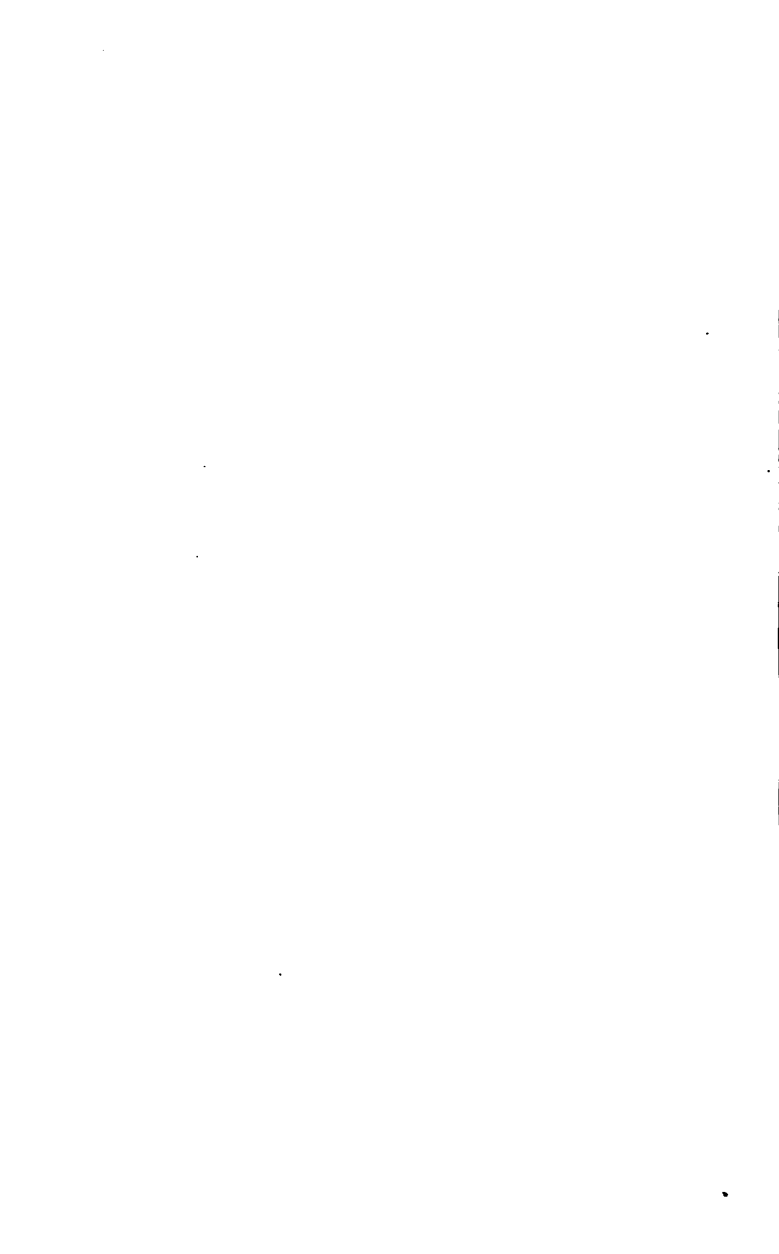
Though the whole party thought this delusion very fortunate for them, Mr. Grey said he was far from being satisfied with the propinquity of the savages ; for though his fortress was well victualled for the support of one person, yet for so many it would be necessary to descend to the plains for food, in the event of a long siege—an unpleasant risk.

“ Will you allow me to make an experiment ? ” said Elliott. “ I know that I have amongst my ammunition one of the splendid fireworks I brought out to amuse the chiefs through whose grounds I passed in coming from the colony. I think it might make a grand impression on these superstitious fellows. And see, there is a dark cloud over the sun favourable for my exhibition.”

This was agreed to. Elliott attached his “ fiery serpent,” as it was inscribed, to a long lathe, fired, and whirled it down. It certainly was well named, for, hissing loudly, it extended its fiery course over the heads of the terrified Africans below, scattering showers of sparks and coloured balls of fire, and finally bursting with a tremendous explosion. A doleful cry was heard from the dismayed people below, who had fallen on their faces, and who remained for some



Mr. Grey and his Goats



civilizing the wild tribes. Besides these, I had three waggons of furniture, provisions, and all the necessaries, and the luxuries which become necessities in refined European life. Several of my Hottentots had already accompanied travellers far beyond the Orange River ; they were acquainted with the Sichuana language common to the Bechuana tribes, and I relied on them as valuable interpreters. Each of the waggons was drawn by a span of twelve oxen ; besides which we had eight horses for riding, and drove with us a large herd of oxen, several milch cows, and an excellent flock of sheep, as well for provision on our long journey, as to stock a farm, when we should fortunately meet with a settlement.

“ My beloved Maria not only saw with cheerfulness a large portion of our wealth invested in these preparations, but she even urged me to further liberality. ‘ Let us use the riches that God has bestowed on us,’ she said, ‘ to enlarge his kingdom, and publish the glad tidings of salvation. In this retirement from the world, our children will be removed from its temptations, and our hours of recreation can be spent in forming their minds, and communicating such knowledge and acquirements as may fit them for the duties of life.’

“ We set out in high hopes, followed by the blessings of many benevolent hearts, who, like ourselves, desired to do good, but had not such ample means. We were fully employed in instructing our numerous and imperfectly-taught servants, and in examining the strange and interesting regions through which we passed. With these pleasures were necessarily mingled the little casualties to which our large caravan was subjected ; but we made our way safely over the green

plain and the dry desert, crossed the large river, and journeyed through kraals of half-civilized Griquas and Bechuanas, whom I conciliated by presents, or awed by producing my letters from the government, of which they recognized the seal, and my Hottentots translated to them the purport.

“ But I did not remain with these people ; I sought a still more remote region ; and, after many months’ rambling, fearing that all my cattle would be consumed, I selected a fertile spot, near a small kraal of poor, ignorant, and wild creatures, who, terrified by the appearance of our formidable caravan, willingly accepted our presents, and refrained from molesting us.

“ We were all, by the mercy of God, spared through the perils of our journey, and were in good health ; but the whole of our horses, except one, had perished, and our flocks and herds were greatly diminished. Close to the kraal—which I proposed should be the seat of my first labours—four of my Hottentots, experienced labourers, erected for me a neat dwelling-house, the glass windows for which, and other fittings, we had brought from the Cape. Then they built huts for themselves, and inclosed ground for the cattle kraals.

“ The natives looked on with stupid wonder, while we fenced and tilled the ground, sowed seeds, and planted fruit-trees. They seemed to pity men who subjected themselves to so much unnecessary labour, and, so long as we fed them, they sat idly watching us, crouched on the earth. If we refused to give them food, the men would go forth and kill a buffalo or an eland with the sharp assegai or poisoned arrow. This was dragged to the kraal, and consumed on the spot, either absolutely raw, or merely scorched over a fire. .

"I did not dare to preach the sublime truths of religion to such wretched savages ; I contented myself at first by showing to them its blessed results. They saw with astonishment the gardens we had tilled produce vegetables and fruit in abundance, the fields rich with waving corn ; they saw the order, the neatness, the repose of our happy community. My wife acquired some knowledge of their language, and pleased the women by repeating their words ; she took their young babes and washed and clothed them in light and suitable garments. They began to love her, and then she tried to teach them more important things, and, I own, succeeded sooner and better with her pupils than I did with mine.

"I found the men sly, suspicious, cruel, and intractable. They did not object to the chase even of the fiercer animals ; they enjoyed the excitement ; but they would not cultivate fields and gardens, lest some inimical and more powerful tribe should, tempted by their wealth, invade them, and destroy their lives. After a little time, they began to listen with some attention to my religious exhortations, and seemed to understand, in some degree, the beautiful scheme of Christianity ; but they refused to hear the doctrine of peace and forgiveness, and their dull eyes glistened at the name of their enemies. But they learnt to revere the name of God, and to bow their knees when I prayed ; and I trusted, by His help, to bring some, at least, into the fold. To extend the sphere of my usefulness, I sought out some small kraals at a short distance, where my gifts to the people, and my evident desire to do them good, obtained me a hearing ; and thus for twelve months all went on hopefully, and without interruption.

"I shrink from proceeding. . . . One day—one fatal day—I left my beloved wife, and my sweet, fair-haired darlings, my Mary and Elizabeth, to proceed, attended by a faithful servant, to the nearest kraal, where I was accustomed to make a weekly visit to give instruction. From thence I proposed to go on to a tribe some miles distant, to whom I had promised some needful gifts. I was mounted on my horse, with a portmanteau, which contained a change of linen, my books, and also my vestments, which it pleased the people to see me wear. My servant Jan followed me leading a pack-ox laden with seeds and implements, though I doubted much whether I could induce my new congregation to use them.

"I had remained for some hours at the first kraal, instructing the people, when a man was brought in who had been wounded in the arm by a lion, and with difficulty rescued. I sent Jan back on my own horse, to procure, at my dwelling, bandages, my surgical instruments, and medicine-chest, and I waited anxiously for his return. He was not long absent ; he came riding back at a pace which would have alarmed me, had not the occasion warranted it. But when he reached me, I saw that he had brought no dressings, and that he was pale and speechless. A trembling seized me ; I besought him to tell me the cause of his agitation, but it was long before he could articulate ; then he said, ' All are gone ! house and kraal ; all one great fire ! all burnt ! all dead ! '

" ' My wife and children ? ' I demanded in a frantic voice.

" ' De pretty misses sleep in dar beds when de fire come ; all die ! all de wives ! all de little ones ! '

"In my despair, I struggled to mount my horse,

that I might ride back, and myself discover the truth ; but before I could do it, I fainted, and lay long insensible. I recovered to find my weeping servant alone watching anxiously over me ; the inhabitants of the kraal, carrying off the wounded man, had fled in terror to hide themselves from the terrible invaders.

“ He was now sufficiently composed to relate to me the particulars of the terrible catastrophe. He said that as he drew near our quiet kraal, he was dismayed by the sight of thick smoke rising from the spot. He concluded some accidental conflagration had caused this, and galloped forward, alarmed for his own family, as well as for that of his master. But soon he met a party of terrified natives flying from the spot to hide themselves in a neighbouring wood. They were people who had but lately joined our kraal, and were in the infancy of all knowledge ; but he extracted from them the information, that a large troop of savage warriors had come from the north, surrounded the kraal, driven off the cattle, led off the men as slaves, and slaughtered the women and children. Finally, they had burnt the huts, and the miserable fugitives had only escaped from the circumstance of being in a wood behind the kraal, where they had taken up their abode till a hut was erected for them, and from which they had witnessed the dreadful massacre.

“ The trembling people passed on their way ; but the brave Hottentot rode forward to the still burning kraal. He saw the earth scattered with the dead. He saw the smouldering ashes of his own hut,—the blazing walls of my beloved home ; but all human life was extinct. Still he lingered amidst this scene of misery, stupified with grief, horror, and despair,

when a savage, who had returned to recover a refractory cow, flung an assegai which struck him down, and wounded him in the shoulder.

“When he arose, all was still ; the murderers had departed, and left behind them desolation and death. Then Jan remounted his horse, and galloped back to me with the fearful intelligence ; though his wound gave him so much pain, that he feared the assegai must have been poisoned. I hastened to examine his shoulder, and to wash and dress the wound as well as I could ; then, scarcely conscious of my intentions, I set out to my desolated home, Jan following me, mounted on the laden pack-ox.

“In a gloomy stupor, we reached the fatal spot, where smoking ashes alone remained to show where the kraal had been. The slaughtered bodies of the men who resisted, and the women and children who were unable to resist, lay around. We examined anxiously. Jan discovered the body of his wife with her infant in her arms, both cruelly pierced with assegais ; but my treasures were not to be found, their ashes were too surely mingled with those of our once happy dwelling.

“In a mood of madness, I determined to follow the murderers, and Jan, actuated by a spirit of revenge, was willing to accompany me. We had each a musket with us, and before we left the place, we sought my magazine, which was hollowed out in the earth at the extremity of the garden, and securely covered with stones. It had escaped discovery, and we removed from it as much powder and shot as our laden animals could carry. To this Jan prudently added a bag of maize, and one of wheat, drawn from another subterranean depository.

"Then we started forward, and as my own impression, probably produced by the report of my fugitive people, was that the robbers were from the north, we proceeded in that direction, and night and day, with little rest, urged our poor animals forward, subsisting on the dry corn we carried, and water when we could obtain it. But every hour my faithful and attached servant grew worse, and when we were crossing the dry and pathless karroo, his suffering was increased by thirst. The slow poison had crept into his blood ; his limbs became swoln, his eyes wild, he fell on the earth, and besought me to leave him to die alone, lest I should also perish in this parched wilderness.

"Then reflection came upon me ; I abhorred myself for my selfishness and cruelty. I wept and prayed over my last friend ; I sought round in vain for a drop of water to moisten his dry lips ; but the ox, left free to follow its own path, by God's mercy led me to a low thorny bush, beneath which was a small pool of muddy water. Leaving the thirsty animal to reap the first benefit of the blessing, I returned to bring my dying friend before me on my horse. I dipped my cup into the turbid stream, and moistened the lips, and the swoln and distorted face, of my friend ; he turned his eyes on me with gratitude, and lifted them up to heaven with pious hope, then closed them for ever.

"It was not till this new misfortune befel me that I realized all the horrors of my strange position. Bereft of all I loved, alone in a desert, surrounded by enemies day and night, helpless and aimless, I sunk on the ground in feeble-minded despair. I remained on this spot for twenty-four hours ; I buried my faithful Jan, reading aloud the beautiful words of our

burial service, now for the first time uttered in that silent desert.

"Another day dawned on me, and with undefined aim I moved onward to escape from the horrors of the karroo. I reached more fertile ground, and at length, with a dull satisfaction, arrived at the broad, clear river. I bathed my burning brow in the cool water. I sat down under the shady willows, and, like the Hebrews of old, wept, when I remembered my Zion. These were the first tears I had shed, and they relieved my heated brain.

"But my relief was transient ; the shades of evening were falling, when I beheld at some distance the smoke that indicates the presence of man. I was persuaded that I had overtaken the murderers, and, agitated by mingled hopes and fears, I resolved, at all risks, to approach them. I tied up my animals, took up my loaded gun, and plunged into a thick wood, which extended from the river to the spot where I had seen the smoke. As I drew near, I used the greatest caution in my movements ; I saw many dark forms crouched round a large fire, cooking or devouring some food ; but I saw no prisoners,—no fair faces ! I climbed a tree in the wood, not more than fifty yards from the fire, from whence I could conveniently view the whole scene. They were certainly barbarians, naked, savage, and hideous ; but as they had no cattle or prisoners, I could not believe they were the vile murderers I sought.

"As I watched them, they drew from the fire the pointed stick on which they were roasting their feast, and all uttered loud shouts. A strange tremor came over me, for I felt certain that I saw on the stick the limbs of a human being.

"The next moment one of the savages cast upwards, to fall into the fire, the head of a man, of a dark African, but still a fellow-creature. Overcome with sick horror, I lost my hold, and fell from the tree among the bushes beneath, making a loud rustling noise. With shrill cries, the savages rushed towards the wood, and I believed I was lost. But a louder rustling succeeded ; my fall had disturbed a sleeping elephant ; and, at the moment the first savage entered the wood, he was overthrown and trampled on by the huge brute, which rushed over the plain, followed by the whole of the savages, except the insensible victim of the elephant, leaving me alone and uninjured, except by the barbed thorns of the '*Wait-a-bit*' bushes, from which I extricated myself with difficulty, made my way back quickly to my cattle, mounted and fled without resting till I lost sight of the smoke, which I now shuddered to look on.

"Still, as I rode onward, I looked anxiously at the river, hoping I might be able to cross it ; but finding that impossible, I continued to journey by the side of it, till I arrived at the wood below this spot. It was then evening, and I proposed to rest in one of the thick branching trees, which I saw were numerous.

"As I drew near, I was astonished to behold, as I thought, the walls of a strong castle rising over the trees. I soon discovered my mistake, and stood, lost in wonder and deep reverence, gazing on the mighty work of God."

CHAPTER XXII.

An Ascent into the Regions of Air. The Home of Refuge. Employments of the Recluse. An alarming Accident. Mr. Grey's Story concluded. Employment for all. The Spring Rains. The Amusements of Confinement.

"HAVING vainly sought some hollow in the rock to shelter me, I selected a lofty tree of the oak kind, which grew close to the mountain-side, for my lodging; I tied my horse and ox to the trunk, allowing them space to graze; I wound round me the long rope which had been used to secure the implements on the ox, and with which I intended to attach myself to the boughs, lest I should fall in my sleep; then, strapping on my saddle-bags to serve as a pillow, I climbed the tree easily, for I was then active, and accustomed to such feats. I chose a stout-branched arm of the oak, about forty or fifty feet from the ground, on which I placed my bags, secured the rope round my waist and to the trunk, committed my soul to God, and slept.

"For many hours fatigue gave me sound rest, then dreams of the horrors I had endured disturbed me, and I awoke trembling and fearful. I looked round, and again I saw from my elevated lodging the distant dark smoke which proclaimed the presence of my savage foes. I was safe from observance while I remained in the tree, but the cattle and packages below might betray me, and I felt distracted when I contemplated the horrible fate which awaited me. I climbed to the highest branches of the lofty tree to look carefully around, for the morning was just dawning, and enabled me to make observations.

"The summit of the mountain was still far above me ; but I saw that the thick brushwood which hung over the edge descended even to the spot where I stood. It came into my mind to endeavour to ascend to a height where I should be beyond the power of the cannibals, though whether I should arrive at a deep hollow, a burning volcano, or a bare rock, I could form no idea. I descended to my sleeping-place, and brought up the rope, which I bound round my body, and attached the end to the tree ; then, after a prayer for God's assistance, I seized hold of the bushes, and with little difficulty, though much lacerated by the thorns, I gained the mountain-top, forced my way through a thicket three times as deep as it now is, and came upon a wild and beautiful scene.

"Tall and entangled grass grew beneath trees of many kinds ; the water, falling over one side in a broad cascade, poured into the lake in the centre, and a number of wild goats, undisturbed by my presence, remained sleeping or feeding on the herbage. My heart felt relieved from all oppressive fears ; for here, in this primeval solitude, were safety and subsistence. Then I said to myself, 'Surely God, who has mercifully conducted me to this peaceful haven, commands me to preserve my life for some special purpose. I will remain here, and, by prayer and meditation, endeavour to prepare myself for the new labours he may call me to in his own good time.'

"I still desired to preserve the useful lading of my cattle, and I proposed to bring it, if possible, to my retreat. I therefore again descended, let myself down to the ground, and by slow degrees carried all my property to the higher branches of the tree. Lastly, I removed the harness from my faithful servants, and

reluctantly gave them liberty, for it was impossible to convey them to my proposed retreat. I caressed them, and then, by words and signs, ordered them to leave me ; but they lingered, as if unwilling to accept their freedom, till I had removed the last vestiges of my possessions. At length, I saw them moving on to feed on the rich-pastured plain ; and I was then struck with the painful conviction that I had severed the last link that bound me to my kind ; for alone, and on foot, I could never hope to reach the abode of man.

“It was broad daylight before I had removed from the earth every trace that could rouse suspicion, and returned to my watch above. Then I saw that the fierce natives were busily engaged in sharpening their spears and assegais ; after which the men set out in different directions, leaving the women and children ; from which I judged they had gone off to the chase, and intended to return to the same spot. Fortunately, no one approached the mountain ; it is probably shunned by all the tribes as the abode of the evil spirit ; and I was thus enabled, without observation, to hoist all my property to my place of refuge, by means of the rope. How thankful I felt then, looking round at my pleasant domain, to feel that neither cruel man nor savage beast could reach me.”

“You were much better off than Robinson Crusoe in his island,” said Julia ; “for you had not even the savages to fear. No king could be so peaceful and happy as you.”

“Alas, my dear child,” said he, “happiness is not of this world. The remembrance of my bereavement, my utter loneliness, my useless life, soon depressed my spirits, and I became miserable. Then I turned to God for aid, and He graciously heard my prayer. My

eyes were opened to my ingratitude, and I sought labour, incessant occupation, to make life endurable. Roused from my torpor, I opened all my packages, and found the blessings designed for others devolve on myself. To aid my plans of industry, I had spades, axes, large knives, a small saw, some nails, garden seeds, and even a good portion of maize and wheat.

“My first employment was to dig a piece of ground near the lake, to level it, and sow it with wheat and maize. Then I cut down a part of the troublesome bush, and fenced my little fields, that the goats might not steal my corn when it sprung up. These spots I irrigated daily, for the soil was light and dry. While I worked thus, I subsisted on the crushed maize, and the wild plums which grew on my own estate.

“Before I finished this labour, the savages, to my great comfort, had departed; and I then ventured to descend daily, when I sometimes sought the nest of the ostrich in the sandy plains to the south, and brought away two or three eggs; or I shot a buffalo or eland, skinned it, and after washing and cleaning the skin with sand, I suspended it on a tree to dry. With these skins I proposed to make a tent against the rainy season. I usually cut up my game below, that I might transport it with more ease to my abode, and I carefully preserved the entrails, of which I had learnt, during my residence among the natives, to twist ropes of any degree of strength.

“After a short time I had the means of forming my first habitation, which was a rude tent, covered with skins, sufficient to shelter me from sun and dew. Then I varied my labours by cultivating a part of my territory as a garden. Among the packages of useful seeds of vegetables I had saved, were mingled those of

some of the flowers of Europe ; to these I added the most beautiful of the flowers and creeping plants from the woods and plains below, and pleased myself with the arrangement of them to suit my taste.

“Next, I fenced a large portion off for the goats, and tamed them till they submitted to be milked into the ostrich-egg bowls, which, with the exception of a small silver cup, which I always carried about me, are all the vessels I have ever possessed, nor have I ever had any other cooking utensil than a pointed stick as a spit.

“The rapidity of vegetation in this delightful climate is extraordinary. My plots of ground were soon waving with riches. I had corn and vegetables in profusion, and I then desired to cook them ; I therefore set about making an oven. I dug a hole in the earth, and lined it with flat stones from the lake, and when I wished to use it, I heated it by making a fire in it for some time ; then I swept away the embers, placed my meat or vegetables in the hole, which I covered with another flat stone, on which I kept up a fire till my viands were cooked.

“After this, I proceeded to make bread ; I pounded my corn between two flat stones, mixed it with milk in a bowl, then pouring it out on a flat stone, baked it in the oven. Thus I had every necessary of life ; but, lest indolence and ease should produce dejection of mind, I continued to improve my domain. I levelled the slope into terraces ; I dug channels for the water to run to the lake ; and I cleared away the brushwood, of which I formed piles, for fuel and other useful purposes.

“I have never been quite lonely ; I have had my goats, which know me, and flock round me when I

visit them ; I have flocks of pigeons of the most lovely plumage, which certainly rob me of part of my corn ; but in return are my familiar friends, and, perched on my shoulder, often share my meals. They are shy at your presence, but in a little time you will be no longer strangers. Then I have enjoyed my communion with God ; morning and evening I have performed my usual devotions, and read the Psalms and Lessons aloud, that I might not forget my own tongue, and in these moments I have been truly blest ; for I have felt that my day of probation would pass, and a brighter scene unfolded itself to the eye of faith.

“So passed the first year. I frequently saw the warning smoke of the wandering savages, and then remained in my retirement. The rains came in due season ; but I had improved my tent, and suffered little inconvenience, employing my time, when thus confined, in twisting strong ropes, in the hope of ultimately succeeding in making a long ladder. But one day, descending in my usual mode, I was startled by the fancy that I heard footsteps below, and losing all presence of mind, my foot slipped, and I fell from a considerable height to the ground.

“My first fear was that I had literally fallen into the hands of the enemy, but I soon discovered that the steps were only those of my old horse, which often haunted the spot to eat a little corn from my hand. He neighed with joy to see me, but I was little able to caress him ; I felt that I had broken my leg, and I shuddered to think that I might lie there and perish. I determined to exert every effort to return ; I drew myself to a tree from which I could easily strip the bark, which I succeeded in doing, then binding this

support firmly round the limb, I tied it with my handkerchief. I took off my loose robe, and formed it into a sling round my neck to support my leg. After this, I strained every nerve to climb the tree; the attempt caused me inexpressible agony, but, after many hours' exertion, I succeeded in reaching my home. My head burning with fever, and my whole frame in agony, I crawled to the running water—I drank and bathed my head—I still believed I must die; but I gained my tent, and sank down in a swoon. I remained long quite senseless, and for twenty-four hours was almost unconscious; then I awoke from my delirium faint and enfeebled. I reached some bread from my table and ate, and again crawled to the stream to drink. I replaced, as well as I was able, the fractured bone; but I was sufficiently well acquainted with surgery to be certain that I should be lame for life, the exertion of climbing the tree had so far displaced the fractured bone.

“For some days I suffered much pain, and lay almost constantly helpless on the earth; but necessity compelled me to exertion, and by means of a short staff I dragged myself slowly from one spot to another, milked my goats, and supplied myself with water. I had, fortunately, baked a good supply of cakes the day before my accident, and on this temperate diet I subsisted till I was able to rise with the assistance of a stick. Then I cut some forked branches for crutches, and supporting my leg on a sling of skins, I was enabled to move about; but I never could expect to descend to the ground again by means of my old method, and therefore, in my infirm condition, I amused and employed myself in constructing the ladder I had so long planned.

"It was a most difficult task to twist and join the cable to be long enough to reach the earth ; and before one side was completed, I despaired of success ; but perseverance and uninterrupted leisure won me the victory. The steps occupied me for weeks ; for each step had not only to be knotted to the sides, but riveted with nails, my whole stock of which I exhausted to render my work secure. Then I planted two stout forked posts, which I had provided long before, and I finished by making the rude windlass which excited the contempt of your carpenter, but which I regarded as a triumph of uncultivated art. How proud I was when I first unrolled my ladder, to try its length ; attaching stones to the end to draw it out : and how I longed to try its stability,—but months elapsed after my accident before I was able to do this. In the mean time I was compelled to kill some of the young kids for food, and to prevent them from increasing beyond my wishes.

"At length my returning strength enabled me to descend my ladder ; I accomplished my descent in safety, and enjoyed the change of scene. I collected some ostrich eggs, and with a bow and arrows I had made in my long confinement, I shot a pair of guinea-fowls, that I might have a change of diet. After several trials, I felt satisfied that my ladder was available, and I then ventured to cut down the tree by which I had first attained access to my Mount Tabor, as I called it, and thus I trusted that I made my fortress impregnable. To cut this tree down was a work of time and labour for my weak arms, but I completed my task without disturbance, and having lopped the branches, I cut up the trunk into poles of the proper length to build a hut, as no tree on my

domain was suited for the purpose. These poles I contrived to draw with me up the ladder as I ascended, by means of a rope, which was not then long enough to reach the ground ; since that time I have lengthened it as I had materials and leisure.

“The building my hut occupied me for a month ; but I felt more like a civilized being when I had completed it. From time to time I have added to the comforts of my retreat ; occasionally I have been agitated by the sight of the wandering savages who cross the plain ; and I have ever been haunted by idle fancies that I may once more on earth meet with my lost ones ; time and religion alike failing to crush the hope.

“Conceive my joy, dear strangers, when I heard again, after five solitary years, the accents of my beloved native tongue ! Conceive my pleasure in welcoming to my retreat the gentle and helpless wanderers, who brought painfully to my mind my own sweet babes ! Do not hasten to leave me, good friends ; your wanderings are full of peril ; and when the day of your departure does arrive, it will be bitter for me to remain again alone, and my infirmity forbids me to hope that I shall ever see the abode of man more.”

“Rely on it, worthy and hospitable man,” said Mrs. Churchill, “that we whom you have succoured in the hour of need will not leave you to your solitude. At present, we must be thankful for the protection of your tranquil abode ; but we have all strong motives, as soon as prudence warrants the attempt, to endeavour to make our way to civilization. Then, our ingenious mechanics will, doubtless, be able to make a light litter to contain you, and our stout men will, I

am sure, lend a hand to carry their kind host onward with our slow-moving caravan. Do not look so much appalled, Mr. Pinchard, I certainly do not expect you to volunteer to become a bearer."

"I certainly couldn't do it, madam," answered he; "and, indeed, I see no objection to remaining here; it is comfortable and quiet. There are neither lions, serpents, nor savages; and Mr. Grey keeps a good table, though, I must say, not neatly set out. I cannot see, I'm sure, why people should fidget about setting out again."

"Stay, if you will, man," said the lady, impatiently, "but we must depart when a fitting opportunity occurs. What say you, my friends?"

All agreed to the suggestion, and plans for the litter, plans for huts, plans for all manner of employment, amused the young and lively of the community.

"I accept the office of schoolmaster to the natives," said Mr. Grey, "and though my eyes are somewhat weakened by unavailing tears, I cannot help fancying there are some faces I have seen before among them."

The Africans were called near to Mr. Grey, and the two brothers fell on their knees, Mataban, in his imperfect English, saying, "We not know de good white man, when we see de white hair and de dark skin. Only when he say de 'Pray God,' we know it be our own good father. Den we go away; we tink de good father will speak loud, and say, 'Bad men, to run away, and not die wid de good mother and de pretty babe.'"

"No, my sons," answered Mr. Grey in their own language; "you were right to flee; you could not have saved my wife and children. These are the fugitives of whom I spoke, and who escaped the murderers,"

said he, turning to his guests. "They had been but a short time under my care ; and I will gladly resume the instructions I had then but just commenced. I trust the other two Africans are not unwilling to become Christians."

Mrs. Churchill explained that Diego was already baptized in the faith ; and Mayetta, having acquired a little English, was admitted into Mr. Grey's adult class. In the mean time Norah and Abdalla had prepared dinner,—a stew made of kid's flesh, lentils, and carrots, and a quarter of a kid roasted on a wooden spit. John was employed to bruise corn between two flat stones, which he declared was "the clumsiest way o' grinding wheat he iver heared on ;" but the African women proved that they surpassed him in this art, which they had been accustomed to practise, when they could obtain corn. All were busy and happy, and the spirits of their host seemed to revive in the social circle.

"Oh, Miss Keenmark, this is perfectly charming !" said Julia, next morning. "This is what I have always wished for. It is much better than an island ; for we need have no dread of those terrible canoes that always spread such dismay in islands. We have planned so much work ; see, mamma, Dick is staking out places for huts, and we are going to build immediately."

"But Mr. Grey, Julia !" said Mrs. Churchill.

"Oh, he has given us *carte blanche*," said the delighted girl. "He will keep school, we are all to attend in school-hours ; but after that we must not be one moment idle. Dick and John will cut and fix poles for the corners of the huts and the sides ; then we are to fill up the intervals with walls of wicker-work ; you will help us, Mr. Pinchard !"

"But, indeed, miss, if the walls are to be made of those 'stop-a-bit' thorns, I cannot touch them; I should be lamed for life," replied the indolent man.

"Nothing of the sort," answered Julia. "Do you see the pretty slender willows and the tall rushes that grow round the lake? Mr. Marshall will lop the branches of willow, and Pierre is to cut the rushes; then mamma and Miss Keenmark are to have the light work of peeling the willows, and you can help them if you like. We intend our hut to be light and pretty; Dick says Mr. Grey's hut is as poor a bit of work as he ever saw turned out of hand; and we must do better. Maude, what work would you like?"

"Oh, Julia, how overpowering you are," answered Maude; "you are becoming as fond of rough work as Margaret. You know I am not strong, but perhaps I might plait some rushes, and Angeline could sew the plait, if that would be of any use."

"It will be of great use, Maude," said Margaret; "if you will learn to plait baskets such as Mayetta tells us the wives of the chiefs make, to contain food, and even milk. Now some wicker dishes and plates would be very useful. Do try to make them, Maude, for we all mean to be useful; Norah and Abdalla will cook, and I am learning to milk the goats. Besides, if he can get nets made, Charles has promised to ensnare some guinea-fowls, wild ducks, and turkeys, that I may tame them, and have a poultry-yard."

"And what part are Captain Stockport and I to take, young ladies?" asked Dr. Cameron; "for I see all the youths are beginning to work in earnest."

"I think, doctor," said Julia, "that you must be the gardener, for you understand botany and horticulture; and Edmund may be the plough-boy."

"Thank you, Julia," answered Edmund ; "but I intend to lend a hand to the builders, and Elliott has promised that Hubert and I shall accompany the hunting-party when they have a day."

"I am out of my element, ladies," said Captain Stockport. "I cannot dig ; I will not be the tailor of the community ; but I can twist a rope as well as ever, if I had the material. I think I could even make a net, if I had some sinews or thread."

It was wonderful how much work was accomplished in a few weeks, by earnest intentions, and a judicious division of labour. Two pretty huts were raised, the roofs projecting beyond the walls to form a verandah or shady retreat from the noon-day sun ; this was supported on wooden pillars, to be entwined with the fragrant yellow jasmine in due season. The huts were even divided into rooms by wicker walls. The forest below supplied wood for every purpose ; and Dick, with the aid of his ready assistants, fitted up each hut with tables and seats.

No signs of the savages had been seen since the last alarm, and the hunters procured game in abundance, besides capturing, after the nets were made, six guinea-fowls, as many wild turkeys, and two pair of ducks, which, after their wings were clipped, were allowed to roost in the trees, or sail on the lake, in accordance with their respective habits ; but they all learned soon to know the voice of Margaret, who fed them liberally every day, and was rewarded by a plentiful supply of eggs,—an agreeable addition to the table.

Besides all this, the garden had been enlarged, and more plots of ground tilled and sown with corn, in order to provide for the increasing party who required it ; the spring was now come in, and all promised plenty.

But the sky began to look gloomy, and by Mr. Grey's advice, a large supply of venison and buffalo-flesh was procured by the hunters, dried in the sun, and stored within a shed, secured from the rain. In this store-room Mr. Grey had also many bags filled with the corn of previous years, which he had accumulated, lest he should ever be visited by a year of famine. A shed was also raised near the huts for the milch-goats, that they might be easily reached in the rainy season. Even fuel was cut and stored under the shed ; for Mr. Grey assured them that, during the spring and autumnal rains, the evenings would be chill, and they would require fires in the damp huts.

While Diego was engaged with the sportsmen in procuring game for future provision, he was much pleased one day to be recognized by his horse, which was in excellent condition, and apparently on good terms with the quaggas ; for he was accompanied by a young one, which followed him to the foot of the rock, where Diego fed them both with maize : this indulgence he repeated on several successive days, to induce them to frequent the spot, and he proposed, if it was thought desirable, to attempt to tame the quagga for service. But John here put in his professional claims, and declared that, " Unco' creater as it was, no man that stood there could break in a beast like him, and he meant to do it."

But the time was not fitting for this undertaking ; heavy showers fell daily, though not so continuously as the rains they had experienced in the autumn. And, instead of the miserable shelter they had then been thankful for, they had now snug huts, impervious to the rain, and stored with necessaries. Under these circumstances, work was pleasant ; everybody's

wardrobe was repaired, nets and baskets were made ; and the young acquired a variety of knowledge from their more experienced friends.

Albert Beaumont was a man of great information, which he had the will and the way to communicate agreeably ; Dr. Cameron was a proficient in the natural sciences ; Captain Stockport rejoiced to give lessons in mathematics and astronomy ; Miss Keenmark, Charles declared, was a living cyclopædia ; and the pious Mr. Grey regulated every study, pursuit, or pleasure, by the pure and lovely laws of God. Even the poor Africans woke to the sense of God's presence at all times ; they became true Christians, faithful to God and their benefactors ; while the children were taught by the young ladies, and lost the dull and stupid look of ignorance.

Perhaps Charles and Hubert might occasionally feel the confinement irksome ; but even they contrived to employ themselves in carving from the roots of trees, cups, platters, and other useful articles, for the benefit of the community. The evenings were gay with dance and song, in which the Africans joined heartily, with the characteristic love of these amusements common to their race ; and thus the rains of spring, which were to produce plenty, brought no discomfort.

CHAPTER XXIII.

An affecting Discovery. Plans for an Eastern Voyage. The secret Cave. A Descent into the Mountain. The Horse, the Ox, and the Quagga. Elliott's Expedition. The Launch of a Canoe. Preparations for a final Voyage.

It was on the evening of a Sunday, after the services of the holy day were over, that the whole party being assembled under one roof, Mayetta addressed Mr. Grey, saying, "Good father, forgive me for not coming to you this morning ; only to-day have I learnt by accident, from Mataban, the name of the kraal where you were the teacher. Then I knew that it was the warriors of my people that burnt and destroyed it ; though I did not join them till the day afterwards, to conduct the slaves to the coast."

"Then all were not murdered !" exclaimed Mr. Grey, trembling. "Know you, Mayetta, who those slaves were ?"

"Our people do not destroy those who can be sold well," answered Mayetta. "The old and infirm, the nursing-women and their babes,—all who could not bear the journey would be slain. But the strong and young we led away, and after two days' journey, we met some Portuguese merchants, and sold the slaves and the cattle for corn, knives, and tobacco. One white woman, with two fair children, and some strong Hottentots, were well sold."

Agitated with hope and gratitude, Mr. Grey fell on his knees,—his wife and children had escaped the murderers ; and all wept with him as he raised his voice to

thank God for their preservation from death, though it was only to be led into slavery.

"Was your fair daughter named Mary?" asked Diego. "The factor at whose dwelling my master remained at Inhambane, had a fair young slave, whom I loved; for she was named Mary, like the sweet daughter of my good mistress. There were also more white slaves. One was the mother, who, though she was a slave, knew wonderful things, and did not work; but like that lady," pointing to Miss Keenmark, "she taught books and music to the children of the factor."

"Blessed be God!" said Mr. Grey, "my wife and children may yet live. Now, my kind friends, I ask you to permit me to leave this place with you; and if I should have to crawl on the ground, and feed on roots and berries, I will still try to reach Inhambane."

"You are right, sir," said Captain Stockport, springing from his seat. "I am glad that you are convinced of the proper course we ought to take. I see the whole plan before me. The river which runs through the mountain-chain must flow to the Indian Ocean. We have now leisure and security. We ought to be able to build a boat."

"A canoe for the river," suggested Mayetta; "I have seen them near the coast."

There was a short silence: then Albert said, "I do not wish to oppose your scheme, Captain Stockport; but it requires some consideration. In the first place, can we build a canoe large enough for all our freight? Next, how can we be sure that the banks of the river are not lined with hostile tribes, who might easily overpower us? And, lastly, if we should reach Inhambane,

or any part of the coast, can we depend on an hospitable reception, and the means of leaving the place?"

"Hear my proposal, ladies and gentlemen," said Elliott. "John will break us in a quagga, which, with Diego's horse, we will load with stores and ammunition; then, leading them with us, Mayetta, Abdalla, and I will make our way as speedily as possible to the colony. There we will charter a light vessel to Inhambane, anchor there, and with a sufficient force bring boats up the river, and by some means or other, by water or by land, come to this spot, where you can, in the mean time, remain in security. We can then escort you to the coast in safety, for we shall have become experienced in the navigation of the river, and the perils of the land."

"But, surely, Elliott," said Hubert, "you would not doom us all to imprisonment here till you travel half round Africa? Why should not I also accompany you? I have been long due at head-quarters, and may have been superseded."

"That is of little consequence, Hubert," said Mrs. Churchill; "doubtless Colonel Churchill can place you on the list again. It is quite unnecessary that you should attach your useless person to this benevolent expedition. Do remember your last essay, and be satisfied."

But Hubert was not satisfied; and as some time must necessarily elapse before the plan could be put into execution, it was daily discussed, while preparations were gradually made for any emergency. Amongst other things, the Africans undertook to make large goat-skin water-bags, to be suspended from the saddle of the horse. The rains passed away, the gardens were rich in vegetation, and the fields

waved with corn, which a week or two would ripen. In this genial climate so rapid is the progress of vegetation, that Mr. Grey always had two crops in the year.

"I cannot but remark, with astonishment," said Miss Keenmark, "that the lake now scarcely exceeds the limits it reached in the dry season. What has become of all the water that fell from the clouds, and flowed down the channels? It must escape through some unperceived passage in this crater; and, if it be so, is it not probable that the whole mountain is hollowed into caverns, though we were unable to discover any entrance into them?"

"Better as it is, madam," said Captain Stockport. "Here we have light and air. I could almost fancy myself on the deck of a first-rate man-of-war; but of all miserable dwellings preserve me from a cave."

A summons was now sounded for a general visit to the lower regions; the hunters were eager for the chase, John and Diego wanted to look after the horse and quagga, and Dick "to pick up a bit of wood," as he said, for the model of the canoe. Even Mr. Grey descended to look on the beauties of reviving nature, and was as much astonished as the rest of the party to see not only the horse and the quagga grazing at the spot where they had been usually fed, but also one of the pack-oxen, which the party had driven before them when they were pursued by Nangasi and his tribe. It was looking fat and well, and how it had escaped the horrors of the wilderness, and reached this fertile spot, was a mystery never to be unravelled. The meeting was very agreeable to all,—the animals were fed and caressed,—the quagga was bridled by the intrepid groom, and taught its first lesson of submission to the power of man.

"What a capital turn-out we should have," said Elliott, "if we could only keep these cattle for our journey; then we might take you, Hubert, for Mayetta is no equestrian: and only think what an impression the cavalcade would make on our fellows at Cape Town, if we rode in mounted on an old horse, an ox, and a quagga."

"I should like it more than I can tell," said Hubert, mournfully; "but Aunt Churchill is such a martinet; she ought to have been colonel of 'ours' herself."

"My dear friends," said Mr. Grey, "I must ask you to pardon me for withholding from you a circumstance the knowledge of which I did not think would be useful, and might alarm the timid: Miss Keenmark's opinion was correct; there are caverns in the mountain to which I can obtain access, though the entrance I have carefully closed up; but, to secure these valuable animals for the journey, it is worth the risk of opening a way to admit them. John and Dick must remain here to guard them, while you follow me, and see the mystery developed."

The chase was suspended, and all returned with Mr. Grey, who explained the discovery to them. "I was struck," he said, "as Miss Keenmark was, with the rapid subsiding of the water; and, while walking round the edge of the lake one day, to endeavour to find out the cause, my foot slipped through some opening, in passing between two thick bushes that overhung the water, and if I had not caught by the bushes I must have been lost. I extricated myself, bruised and scratched, cut down the bushes, and saw a tolerably wide opening, below which all seemed a dark abyss."

"When my eyes became accustomed to the darkness, I perceived a tiny stream of water falling below from some other opening, and concluded that the

interior of the mountain must be partially hollowed. I set fire to the bushes I had cut down, and flung them into the chasm, and thus obtained a view of a spacious cave, to which I determined to venture a visit, if I could possibly accomplish it. I made some torches of pine wood from the forest,—these I flung down into the cave ; I planted two strong posts in the earth at the opening, from which I suspended my ladder, and began the descent.

“ But this was a much more daring and dangerous adventure than descending to the plain, for the ladder swung about with me, though I carried a pole to steady myself against any projecting rock I could reach, and at length I reached the bottom. I then found that the cave was not perfectly dark, for on one side there were crevices, through which the light shone. The water from above dropped slowly into a natural basin ; but the floor of the cave was dry and sandy, and masses of rock were grouped round in a picturesque manner.

“ This promised to be a cool and pleasant retreat, if more light could be procured ; and this, I thought, might be obtained by widening the crevices, without endangering the security of the place. I attempted, with the pole I carried, to clear away the sand and lichens that filled up one of the lower crevices, when the attempt caused the rock below to totter, and I had scarcely time to spring on one side, when a large piece fell inside, and I saw before me the open space at the east side of the mountain.

“ At first I was alarmed and vexed at this accident ; but I was reconciled to it when I reflected that I had thus secured a second retreat, and a mode of escape if my home above should be invaded. I carefully

explored the whole cave, which did not extend far, and found it free from serpents ; and no other animal could find the means of entrance.

“ By moving some pieces of rock near the place of my descent, and marking the spots where I might firmly rest my staff, I trusted to make my next visit with less peril. Finally, I raised with difficulty the large fragment of rock which had closed the entrance, and piled other pieces against it, to render it immovable from the outside. Since that time I have never resorted to the cave, except that in the scorching heat of summer I have used it to preserve the buffalo or deer I have killed. Now it must become the temporary stable of the cattle.”

After this explanation, Mr. Grey removed the large slab of slate which covered the opening, and the ladder was fixed to the posts. But Mr. Grey was not allowed to descend by this means ; Albert and Charles insisted on performing this duty, and with due instructions were soon in the cave, and had the rocky barrier removed. Great was the astonishment of the grooms when the solid rock opened to give them a stable for their stud. John grumbled a little at the absence of stalls, racks, mangers, and litter ; but Dick offered to construct the fittings, and hay and straw could readily be lowered from above.

Elliott and Marshall had followed Albert and Charles, and they agreed to divide, two setting out on the chase, while the other two kept guard over the cave, Dick filling up his time by cutting down wood for his intended improvements in the stable, while John persevered with strong will, but no cruelty, in subduing the wild quagga.

Two hours after, the sportsmen brought in an eland

and a bag of guinea-fowls, and found pieces of rock placed to form divisions in the stable. The stalls thus formed were littered with wheat straw ; while a good provision of grass was made for each animal. They were then led into their prison, and the entrance secured, though with a less pile of stones than Mr. Grey had first thought necessary, for no danger had alarmed them for some time.

A day or two reduced the quagga to such obedience that Elliott could ride it ; but several days elapsed before it would permit the baggage to be placed on its back. In the mean time, some writing materials having been preserved, Elliott prepared several letters, proposing, that if he reached any kraal in his progress where a trusty messenger could be obtained, to forward a letter, from time to time, to the colony. He hoped that by these means, even if he and the companions of his expedition perished, relief might still reach his friends.

Thus all was in readiness, wanting but the final preparations ; but doubts from the prudent, and tears and entreaties from the timid, retarded the undertaking.

"I am the cause of all this sorrow, my good friends," said Mr. Grey. "Rather let it be decided that we should all set out together ; for the gentle girls weep to part from their friends : or, if it must be that some go south, let Mr. Beaumont also go ; his judgment and discretion may temper the adventurous bravery of Captain Elliott and the rashness of this young boy."

"Be contented, Mr. Grey," said Mrs. Churchill ; "leave the arrangements to more worldly and practical heads than yours. This is your place for the present ; Albert Beaumont we cannot spare, solely because he

possesses judgment and discretion. As for Hubert, he may as well go, he is always getting into some mischief, and might bring the savages on us in some of his frolics. I trust that Captain Elliott, his superior officer, will keep him under discipline."

"Do remember, aunt," said Hubert, "that I am a soldier. I have no taste for farming, or gardening, or carpenter's work, or shoemaking; and I thank you for giving me my discharge. You will see what a capital report Elliott will return of me at headquarters, Mrs. Colonel."

"Generous friends," said Mr. Grey, "there is still one painful arrangement to make. After a certain time, if we do not hear of you, or if, before that time, our retreat should become insecure—contingencies, which may God avert—this must be our plan. Your skilful carpenter is sanguine that he can make a canoe; and, if he succeed, we must commit ourselves to the waters, leaving marks by which our course may be traced if you miss us; and I trust that, under God's protection, we shall reach some friendly port."

"That is my affair, Mr. Grey," said Captain Stockport. "Remember, Elliott, if you do not return in four months, I will embark my crew and passengers in Dick's boat, and I must have lost all my skill, if, God willing, I do not bring the voyage to a favourable termination."

The hour for departure arrived; bags were filled with dried buffalo-meat, fresh-baked biscuits, and all the wheat and maize that could be spared. They carried also a kettle, cups, and such utensils as were absolutely necessary; the water-bags were left unfilled until they were about to leave the river. Hubert and

Elliott had each a handsome new jacket of leopard-skin ; Charles had killed the leopards, and Pierre had made the jackets, sewing them with the dorsal sinews of the spring-boks. Elliott and Hubert had each a rifle and a small supply of cartridges ; for Elliott said, " I hope to strike on the track that will lead us to the wreck of my old waggon, where I had to leave a good store of ammunition. I have no doubt we shall pick up some articles there that will be useful to us, though they may have been despised by the four-footed spoilers that must have turned over our stores. And now, my dear friends, let us get this sad parting over. Farewell ! and God bless you all ! "

It was, indeed, a sorrowful parting. All the party stood on the plain to watch the travellers as long as they could see them ; and nothing was heard for some time but the sobs of the distressed girls, and the shrill cries of the African children for *Elly*, whose good nature and lively manners won every heart.

" Musha ! musha ! what will I do ? " sobbed Norah. " See, now, isn't it Abdalla that had the heart to leave me to mind the fires all alone, but only Peahair. And Miss Marget, mavourneen, isn't it him that has a way of his own to make such messes as niver a thrue-born pig of blessed Ireland would be the baste to ate, let alone quality ladies."

But Pierre was, nevertheless, appointed Norah's coadjutor in the *cuisine*, and after many dissensions, time and propinquity brought about harmony.

" *Jamais ! jamais !* " would Pierre exclaim, when Norah interfered ; " nevarre *des pommes de terre*, de apple of de ground, you call ; nevarre to de natural I make de *fricandeau*, de *ragout*, sharmin' *entremets*."

Norah reviled Pierre's *English* and his cookery

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Elliott and Hubert journeying forth.

but, nevertheless, he had fallen at length into his proper vocation ; and Charles congratulated himself on his profound judgment, in bringing out a servant so clever in expedients, even in this wild solitude. The venison cutlets, the *fricassée* of guinea-fowl, the *pilau* of turkey, with blanched maize, were allowed to be *chefs-d'œuvre* of art ; and Mr. Grey began to be alarmed lest his little flock should become corrupted by the dangerous luxury of the table. Even Norah was subdued to accept the office of scullion under *Maître Pierre*. But in one art she reigned pre-eminent. Dick's ingenuity had turned a small water-cask into a churn ; and Norah produced butter, and even cheese, from the abundant milk of the goats ; the dairy being the lower cave, which was always cool.

In the mean time Dick continued perseveringly to model canoes, after the different forms described to him by Marshall and Diego from their actual observation, and by Edmund from reading, and at length a model was decided on, as the best suited for descending an unknown river. Then, by widening some crevices at a considerable height in the rock, sufficient light was thrown into the cave to make it available as a workshop ; and here Dick began in earnest to build a canoe, "to be in readiness," Captain Stockport said, "in case adverse circumstances should make an immediate flight necessary."

But for some weeks no adverse circumstance arose, and but for the natural repugnance of youth to a life of tranquillity, and the yearnings of the elder portion to join the friends from whom they were parted, this sort of existence might have been called happy. The stronger men reaped the plentiful harvest,

and prepared the ground for a second crop. The garden was rich in fruits and vegetables, and the plains and woods so beautiful, that the young people would often wander for hours among the trees near the mountain.

Edmund's observing eye detected the honey-bird, a pretty little creature, of light gray plumage, which indicates, by its peculiar flight and twittering notes, the treasure hid in some hollow tree, of which it hopes to obtain a share. By the means of this little assistant, and with the skilful aid of the practised Africans, who burnt grass to stupify the bees, a tree was tapped, and a large store of honey taken out, without any fear of impoverishing the industrious colony. The small African plum became palatable when sweetened with honey, and even Pierre consented to use it, though not without a grimace of disgust, for *eau sucrée*, and *les petites confitures*, which he delighted to prepare.

Finally Dick completed a canoe,—long, light, and narrow, which certainly might contain twenty or thirty passengers, but inconveniently, and without baggage.

It was determined to build a second ; but Dick was anxious that this wonderful production of art should be immediately taken to the water, that its powers might be tested, and its imperfections amended. This scheme was certainly not without hazard ; but one bright morning, at break of day, all seemed so fair and tranquil, that it was agreed at once to make the experiment.

The canoe, light and easy of carriage, was borne to the water by Dick, John, Marshall, and Charles, who was a practised rower. Captain Stockport, carrying arms in case of a surprise, was in attendance to pronounce his judgment on the craft.

Dr. Cameron, with Diego and Mataban, undertook to keep watch above, and in case of danger to give notice to Albert, Pierre, and Soosoobe in the cave below, when the African, swift of foot, could be sent to the river to recall the crew with their valuable boat.

Two pairs of oars had been made, and a sail woven of dry grass by Diego, the only one of the Africans who had any skill in maritime concerns. All the party would willingly have witnessed the launch if it had been prudent, and those left behind waited anxiously for the report of the experiment.

Speedily and safely the active bearers reached an opening in the rocky banks of the river, where they launched the boat on the smooth waters, took their seats, and committed themselves to the stream, which flowed slowly to the east. The boat moved admirably, faultlessly; even Captain Stockport allowed that such a flimsy craft could not have been better built. They hoisted the sail, the wind being due west, and glided down the stream with a celerity which was as pleasant as unexpected.

"This is as it should be," said Captain Stockport. "I feel once more a free man, and if Dick will get up a consort, as speedily as ready hands can do it, we will victual her and take in our freight, and God and Mrs. Churchill willing, will leave harbour at once. What say you, Mr. Marshall?"

"I'm more at home on the free water than on the top of an ugly mountain," answered Marshall; "but mightn't it be well, Captain Stockport, to wait a few weeks longer, till Captain Elliott be likely to have sailed from the Cape; for you know, sir, what a set they are over there among those Portuguese factors;

and we should be poorly off with all our helpless passengers up aloft yonder, if we hadn't a vessel to shelter them in better than the black slavers that throng them coasts. And now, captain, wouldn't it be as well to put about ship? We've had a longish run this morning."

"And a mortal, dark, queer place we're gittin into, captain," said John. "I'se not ower fond on't mysel, and see if it dinnot scare some of our womenfolk."

It was a dismal spot; on each side the cliffs rose to a tremendous height; for here the river, deep, dark, and confined, made its way through a gully in the mountains. Curiosity induced Captain Stockport to carry the boat on a little farther, when, being struck with the sight of a huge cave, or miniature harbour, in which the water formed a black pool, he pointed it out to Marshall as a safe haven, in which the second boat might be kept moored, when it was finished, to be in readiness, if any danger caused them to depart suddenly. He also noticed some deep cavities at the height of four or five feet above the water, out of the reach of water or land marauders, where the lading of the boat could be stowed beforehand, to save time at last.

Marshall assented silently, but did not forget the plan; Charles laughed at the idea of danger in the mountain fortress, though quite ready for any adventure; and after a due survey of the harbour, they began to row up the river,—a laborious task, and the rowers were glad to land and stow the boat in the cave for the present.

The second canoe was immediately commenced, and Captain Stockport took care no one should be idle,—some assisted Dick, or wove sail-cloth; some threshed

the corn; others devoted themselves to the chase or the garden. Two months had thus passed since the departure of the messengers, and anxious speculations filled the minds of the friends left behind. If the journey had been prosperous, they must, before this time, have reached the Cape; they must have seen Colonel Churchill, and relieved his worst fears; though he would still be under great anxiety. Or it might be that the travellers were still wandering on the pathless karroo, or had fallen victims to the barbarity of ferocious savages; and then every hope of succour must be abandoned by their helpless friends.

"If you will allow me to resume my command," said Captain Stockport, "I would say, let us seriously prepare for departure. Why should we not this very day transfer some of our heavy freightage to the cave down the river, where it will be in readiness, and not impede our ultimate embarkation. Then, if the cooks will proceed to provision our boat, I will issue orders for the very day we are to leave port."

"Permit us, in the first place, to thrash and grind the whole of the corn," said Mr. Grey; "it is possible that we may need it all; for though the river is here favourable for navigation, it may, like many of the African rivers, disappear in the sandy soil; then we must either risk a tedious land journey, for which I am wholly unfit, or we must make our way back to our Mount Tabor, and abide with resignation the will of God."

"It's yersel as has sinse in your words, Mr. Grey," said Norah. "Sorrah a cake of bread is there to pack up, by rason of the flour been all aten; for didn't I give a grand bag full to Abdalla, to kape him alive, if so be the lions wouldn't ate him up, the proper crater

he is ; and black as he is, wouldn't the bastes make a fine male of him."

But Norah had many hands ready to grind, or rather to bruise, the corn, and a store of biscuit was baked ; after which the second canoe being finished, and ready for trial, some bags of heavy tools and utensils, not likely to be immediately needed, were, according to Captain Stockport's desire, conveyed to the little harbour, and deposited in a snug recess, which, as the cliffs on each side rose hundreds of feet above the level of the water, could only be perceived from the river. Then perfectly satisfied with the boat and the trip, they returned to the cave, and secured the little bark so important to their safety.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Party in the Woods. The Savage Spy. The Death of the Infant. The Siege of the Rock. The Midnight Flight. Voyage down the River. The Battle at the Landing-place. Mr. Pinchard's distraction.

"Do, mamma," said Julia, one fine balmy morning,—
"do allow us to have a pic-nic under the trees, where the ugly quaggas, and the graceful koodoos, with their spiral horns, are feeding ; we will not have a shot fired to molest them,—it shall be quite a peace-party."

"I hear you, young lady," said Dr. Cameron, "and mamma may decide as she likes ; but, I say, suppose a lion should come and gobble up all your good things, or an elephant lay hold of you with his trunk,—or, worse than all, if the savage Mantatees, or Wanketzens, should seize us all, and have a pic-nic after their own cannibal taste."

"Oh, pray, Miss Julia !" exclaimed Mr. Pinchard, "do listen to good Dr. Cameron. Who would ever think of going off gipsying among lions, and such terrible creatures. My food, if it be ever so well cooked, never digests when I am afraid."

"Then, I suspect, Mr. Pinchard," said Charles, "that you are often afflicted with indigestion. But, in this case, I will pledge myself you may feast in complete security, for we have never seen a lion near the place, nor any animal fiercer than the buffalo ; and we can easily send the awkward beast off ; therefore I second Julia's motion, for our aërial paradise is somewhat dull : *Toujours perdrix*, you know, dear Mrs. Churchill."

"But I am not dull, Charles," answered the lady, "neither, I am sure, is Mr. Grey ; still, my children, I agree to grant you amusement ; but we must return before sudden night surprises us, and Mr. Marshall must carry his telescope."

"Depend on it, madam," said Marshall, "I shall keep a good look-out after the enemy ; they shall not take us at a disadvantage."

Delighted with their plan, the young people prepared to carry it out the same afternoon. Norah and Pierre roasted fowls, and baked rich cakes sweetened with honey, which, with bottles of new milk, were packed in baskets, to carry to the beautiful groves which lay west of the mountain. These woods were carpeted with flowers, beneath the shady trees, and were cheerful with the notes of various birds and the chattering of monkeys. They had long attracted the young people, to whom imprisonment was irksome; even in the beautiful solitude which had been their refuge in need.

The party included every one, even the infirm Mr. Grey ; but, not to fatigue him, a place was selected not more than two or three hundred yards from the rock, from whence the ladder, necessarily left suspended, could be seen.

The dinner was pronounced excellent, the voyage was discussed, the results were anticipated, and, with the sanguine ardour of youth, all seemed bright and hopeful. Even Mr. Pinchard became reconciled to the voyage, which would certainly be easier than the land-journeys, which had so greatly annoyed him. After dinner they sung glees, and danced on the turf to the music of a sort of flute, which Edmund had made from the hollow stalk of an umbelliferous plant,

to replace his lamented musical-box, left behind in their escape from captivity.

But the exercise of blowing this rude instrument was rather fatiguing, and he stopped to rest ; and, in the momentary silence that succeeded, Mataban started, touched the arm of Albert, and pointed to a thicket behind the spot where Mr. Grey and some of the quiet party were seated. Albert, comprehending that some danger was at hand, quietly took up his gun, which was near, and beckoned to Charles and Marshall to follow his example, while the Africans snatched their spears ; and, with order and celerity, the little party surrounded the thicket pointed out.

At their approach, a naked and powerful savage sprung from the bush, and attempted to escape ; but failing, he flung his assegai into the group, and pierced the infant son of Mataban, who was playing on the grass. The shrieking mother snatched up her two children, and fled towards the mountain, followed by Mr. Pinchard ; while Mr. Grey, now comprehending the affair, cried out, " Do not fire, or you will have the whole horde on you ; secure the man, and bind him to a tree."

This was soon done, for the infuriated Mataban had already pinned his arm to the earth with his spear, and would have despatched him, but Mr. Grey peremptorily forbade him. Marshall then took on him to cry out, " Away, away, Mr. Grey ! convey the women away in safety, while we gag and bind the spy."

The trembling women obeyed, and, assisting Mr. Grey, made for the mountain. It was, however, a work of time to ascend the ladder singly, agitated as they were ; and they had not all gone up, before the men, having tied the spy securely, followed them.

Captain Stockport was compelled to ascend first ; the rest followed as quickly as possible ; but, before Albert, who was the last, had set his foot on the ladder, he saw a body of fierce Africans round the tree where the spy was bound ; and, had it not been for Dick's improved machinery, it would have been impossible to have hoisted the ladder up, before at least a hundred dark and ferocious wretches were uttering their discordant yells at the foot of the Rock of Refuge.

The poor babe was already dead ; the weapon had pierced its heart ; and the gentle and afflicted girl, who loved the dark child as if it had been as fair as themselves, wept with the distracted mother.

"It was my fault," said Julia ; "my foolish desire for a pic-nic, when we were surrounded by foes, has placed the lives of all in peril, and caused the death of this dear infant."

When the mother understood that Julia was blaming herself for the sad event, forgetting her own sorrow, she knelt down, and pressed the hand of Julia on her own head, to express her devotion to her kind young friend. Mr. Grey sat down by the mourner, and, with calm and soothing words, reconciled her to the will of God, who had taken the Christian babe to his own bright heaven.

"After all, Captain Stockport," said Charles, "it was a cowardly act for well-armed men like us to run away from a handful of naked savages."

"Who were also well armed, recollect, Mr. Staunton," answered the captain. "In a close engagement, I am not sure that their spears, especially if they were, as Mataban suspects, poisoned, would not have cleared the decks sooner than our fire-arms."

"I sincerely wish, Captain Stockport," said Mrs.

Churchill, "that we had earlier acceded to your wish ; now I dread to think that our escape is impracticable. Are we safe even here ?"

"Why, I should say, my good lady," answered he, "the enemy would find it a hard task to board us ; and, as for their shots, we must keep out of their reach."

The savages had, in truth, begun the attack, by retiring to a sufficient distance to enable them to hurl their assegais, and shoot their arrows to the height ; but the thick brushwood that bordered the rock formed an impenetrable shield against the assegais : a few arrows passed over the thicket, but fell harmlessly.

Nevertheless, this state of siege was far from comfortable. They might have avoided even the chance arrows by descending to the cave, but it was too gloomy to be an agreeable retreat ; and lights would have gleamed through the crevices, and might have directed the besiegers to that weak part, where force could have procured them an entrance.

After the sun set, the assailants withdrew to the spot where the unlucky pic-nic had been held, and where sundry substantial fragments of the feast, abandoned in the alarm, would doubtless be discussed, with criticisms on civilized cookery.

Then the savages lighted a large fire, and while some were employed in roasting pieces of meat, others were sharpening spears or forming arrows for further warfare. Marshall, through his glass, was able to observe all their movements, and was glad to report that, after eating their food rapidly and voraciously, they were all crouching round the fire to sleep. This news greatly relieved the anxiety of the besieged.

"Could we not escape now?" asked Julia. "Why should we delay?"

"We have delayed, unfortunately, young lady," said Captain Stockport. "Now we must be prompt, but methodical: we are not ready to sail to-night. To-morrow night, God willing, if the wind and the sky are fair, and those rogues sound asleep, we will launch our boats, and take leave of the good Mount Tabor."

"Then, my good friends," said Mr. Grey, "let us once more assemble, it may be for the last time, in my little chapel, to offer up our evening prayers to Heaven in gratitude for the past, and humble faith in the future." The moonbeams lighted up the pale face of the good priest with a lustre which rendered it beautiful, as his words and the incense of his heart rose to the throne of God, and a calm and holy tranquillity fell on all his hearers. Even the mourning mother ceased to weep, and was able to say "Amen" when the pious man said "Thy will be done."

Early morning showed the busy enemy swarming round the inaccessible rock, and from their loud and energetic discourse, Mataban discovered that, no longer deluded by the dread of supernatural opponents, they were bent on destroying the white men who had flown over the sea, and had made kraals on the green and fertile banks of the rivers to kill all the game. Besides, they desired to have the treasures of the strangers, the guns, the powder, the knives, the corn, and above all the bread, of which they had enjoyed the fragments the preceding evening. This sweet bread had so captivated the fancy of the chief, that he commanded his men, in the massacre, to spare one white woman to be his slave, and to make bread for him. When Mataban repeated this speech, Norah was furious.

"Arrah! see the like of that!" said she. "Is it me that will put hand to the corn for the black villain; barrin' I put pison in it. And isn't the docther the man that kapes a box full of that same; and sorra sin I see in putting in a taste of it, seeing we have male and honey to spare. And wouldn't I knade the cakes, and send down a shower among the rapparees; and the mistress niver the wiser. But I lave all to your honour, docther; seeing ye know the nater of the thing."

The doctor declined to become accessory to such a cold-blooded massacre, and Norah was rebuked by the merciful Mr. Grey; while Charles promised Norah she should not be delivered over to the savages as a peace-offering.

"Now, Mataban," asked Captain Stockport, impatiently, "what are they after?"

The interpreter reported that the chief was decidedly of opinion that the white people had not flown to the mountain-top; but that some entrance must exist; and they were about to surround the rock, and try to discover it.

"Is the entrance safe?" anxiously inquired Mrs. Churchill.

"Have no fears," answered Albert. "Two hours ago, Marshall, John, and I were down, and we have strengthened the barrier so effectually that I believe no outward force can shake it."

However, a small party descended again into the cave to listen to the besiegers, and to remark where they made any attempt on the rock. They heard repeated blows against the rock caused by stones hurled by the assailants; but as no entrance could be detected, they withdrew to continue the attack against

the garrison on the heights, who used every precaution to avoid the arrows, but were compelled to remain above, occupied with preparations for the flight by night. The necessaries required were packed closely in convenient bags. The provisions consisted of dried meat, bread, corn, potatoes, onions, and other vegetables, honey, and the remainder of the coffee. To these were added cooking and other useful utensils, the tent, and baskets of cooked meat and eggs.

All these packages, as soon as ready, were lowered into the cave, and arranged to be conveniently conveyed to the river. After this was completed, Mr. Grey consigned the little Christian he had so lately baptized into the faith, to its lonely mountain-grave ; after which the women and children, with many tears, took leave of the blooming Eden which had been such a providential refuge to them, caressed their favourite birds and goats, and then descended to the gloomy cavern, to be safe from the arrows of the enemy, and to wait the great event.

In the mean time the savages, having expended many assegais and arrows ineffectually, desisted, and again entered into council. From their gestures, and the words which could be gathered, it appeared that they had noticed the wooden bars fixed in the upper part of the rock to steady the ladder, and were proposing some means of reaching them, as they frequently pointed out some tall yew-trees in the wood. Mataban, however, assured his friends that to cut down such trees, with the rude implements the tribes usually possess, would be a work of tedious labour ; but the very idea of the plan for scaling the fortress was alarming, and they thankfully turned to the hope of immediate escape.

Before evening the dark-skinned warriors spent some hours in the chase, and returned loaded with game, then the fires were lighted, and the feasting of the previous evening repeated, after which the whole troop sunk down in sleep. All continued silent till near midnight. Then, "All ready?" asked Captain Stockport in a deep, firm voice. The cheerful, hopeful voices of the young, the low, agitated whisper of Mr. Grey, and the half-sobbing words of Mr. Pinchard, answered. The commander gave the word, and one after another they descended into the cave; Mr. Grey lingering to the last, to cast a farewell glance round the beloved retreat, hallowed by suffering, by resignation, and by hope revived.

The stones, piled before the entrance, were quietly removed, and Marshall, John, and the African brothers lifted the first canoe; Captain Stockport gave the word, the barrier fell, and softly and rapidly the porters took their way to the river, followed by all the females, guarded by Edmund, Mr. Pinchard, and Mr. Grey; they passed with throbbing hearts through the wood, each carrying some basket or packet. The second canoe, carried by Dr. Cameron, Pierre, Diego, and Captain Stockport himself, was then borne off, and all the remaining baggage brought from the cave, after which, Albert, Charles, and Dick replaced the rock at the entrance, and Dick wedged it so firmly, that he declared there would be some difficulty in forcing it from its place again. Finally, to provide against the possibility of their friends reaching the spot before they encountered them, Albert, raised on the shoulders of his friends, traced on the rock, at a considerable height, with a mixture of burnt resinous wood, ashes, and oil, "All well. Seek us at Inham-bane," in large letters.

This accomplished, they carried off the baggage, and soon reached the river, where they found the canoes launched, and the first party already seated, under the direction of the captain. The second boat was freighted with the baggage, and Marshall taking the command, the rest seated themselves where they could find space, the most skilful taking the oars. The night air was fresh and pleasant, the moon was just rising in splendour, and thousands of stars glittered in the clear sky. Before they had rowed a mile, every fear seemed dispersed, and all was hope and pleasure. To sleep was impossible, for they were too much excited; and they conversed on the perils of the past, the mercies of the present, and the hopes of the future, which all proposed should be spent in the earnest fulfilment of duty.

When they reached the cave where they had previously brought a portion of baggage, it was transferred to the canoes, which were now deeply laden; but the river continued smooth, and a gentle breeze from the west induced them to hoist the sails, — a great relief to the rowers. The boats now glided easily and rapidly down the deep narrow river, between its dark rocky walls. The morning dawned slowly upon the deep pass, and revealed the black waters below, and the tremendous mountain-heights on each side. All were awe-struck, and at length Julia said, "Oh! Margaret, how happy I am! I could fancy I was sailing over the dark torrent of human sorrow, which leads to the bright bowers of Paradise."

"It is certainly sublime, Julia," answered Margaret; "but this is not my notion of a happy scene. I love to look on green rich pastures, covered with woolly

sheep and sleek cows, with pretty white farm-houses in the distance, because I fancy all seems so peaceful. Charles is laughing at me ; but I do not care for that. Maude, where is your scene of happiness ?”

“Regent Street in the season,” said Maude, smiling. “Time, four o’clock P.M. Life ! fashion ! gaiety and perfect security ! Or Kensington Gardens and the Coldstream band. The romance of music, Julia. The certainty of comfort, Margaret.”

“Comfort and enjoyment for Miss Maude Seyton,” said Edmund ; “but not quite so much philanthropy as one could wish in a scheme of happiness.”

“Edmund is growing conceited and dogmatical,” said Maude, “since Hubert departed, and he fancies himself the head of the family.”

“Your brother’s reproof is not unjust, my child,” said Miss Keenmark. “The truest happiness that can be found in this world is in the endeavour to do the greatest good to the greatest number. However limited our sphere, depend on it, God has given us a mission which we should not neglect. Norah, who is now engaged in assisting the African women to still the alarmed children, is practically fulfilling a duty, while we have been indulging in vain theories.”

“Not so, Miss Keenmark,” said Mrs. Churchill ; “you never neglect your mission ; and I trust you are now casting good seed into the wild and neglected soil here,” touching Maude caressingly.

Another hour carried them through the romantic pass to the eastern side of the mountains, where the river regained its breadth, and flowed over a green plain covered with the bright scarlet geranium, a vast diversity of the *Liliaceæ*, and hundreds of the beautiful and everlasting flowers of the tropics. The repose

and beauty of the scene tempted Mrs. Churchill to request that they might go on shore for half an hour, to relieve themselves from their cramped position, to perform a hasty toilet, and to eat their breakfast more at ease than they could possibly do in the narrow canoe.

The permission was graciously conceded, the canoes were moored to the lofty willows that hung over the water, and all sprung with alacrity on shore; the young men dispersed in search of novelties, while breakfast was arranged in a grove of lofty trees, twined round with graceful creeping-plants fragrant in the breath of morning.

Edmund returned to invite Miss Keenmark to visit a grove of palms—that splendid tree they had so rarely met with in their wanderings.

“You are right, Edmund,” said she; “this is the *Hyphæne coriacea*, one of the few palms of South Africa. This is remarkable, as these curious plants have ever been found thickly scattered in most parts of the tropical regions. Though the palm was certainly not among the earliest plants which God gave to man, as geology fully proves, yet it must have existed long before our present *Flora*, as fossil traces of palms have been discovered in the carboniferous group of strata.”

“See, Margaret,” said Edmund, “how unlike it is to the well-known cocoa-palm. You may observe the trunk is forked, and each fork is again divided into branches, like our European timber-trees.”

“Can we make any use of it?” asked Margaret.

Julia laughed as she said, “Margaret would have a palm-tree cut down, I do believe, if she could make a sago-pudding from the pith.”

“God has created every plant for some benefit to

his creatures," said Mrs. Churchill ; "and Margaret is right to inquire into their nature ; but we have no time to lose, and as there is no want of food, we will leave the fruit of the palm-trees to the birds, the monkeys, or the wandering natives."

Once more embarked, and the wind continuing fair, they sailed down the broad smooth river swiftly, through beautiful solitudes, where troops of quaggas, antelopes, and graceful giraffes were occasionally seen, while countless tribes of monkeys and parrots chattered in the trees, and flocks of bright scarlet flamingoes and other large birds that frequent the rivers, were disturbed in their enjoyment of the worms on the muddy shores by the unusual presence of man. Before the brief twilight came on, Captain Stockport observing that, when confined between high banks, there were sometimes huge fragments of rock in the bed of the river, which would prove certain destruction to their slender boats, agreed to the request of the party to be allowed to spend the night on shore.

They selected a low shore, and hauled the canoes to land, intending to prepare for passing the night there ; but Mataban, after carefully examining some inequalities in the soil at the landing-place, pronounced them to be the *spoor* of animals which came to drink at the spot, and advised that they should take up their lodging farther from the shore. The timid were all urgent for the measure ; and, though Captain Stockport and Marshall were reluctant to leave the river, where they could in a moment embark, for an unknown land, they agreed, at length, to encamp about fifty yards lower down, and about the same distance from the river, in a grove of shady mimosas, behind which a thick bush formed a wall of protection. To this

spot they carried the lightened canoe, drawing the laden baggage-boat to a little distance from the suspected spoor.

Their first care was to collect large piles of brush-wood, and form a circle of fires round the encampment ; then they ventured to cook some dried meat, and boil eggs for supper ; and, after arranging a watch, they all joined in solemn prayer. The men then lay down to sleep on the soft turf, and the ladies under the shelter of the tent spread over the oars of the boat.

But after some time their sleep was disturbed by loud roars, yells, and shrieks ; all started up in dismay, and beheld, by the light of the moon, the plain covered with a train of huge creatures, proceeding towards the landing-place. There could be no mistake ; it was a troop of elephants, shaking the earth with their heavy tread, which now struck the wondering eyes of the gazers. With grave dignity the animals passed the watch-fires without notice, occasionally uttering a peculiar shriek, which mingled terrifically with the cries of other invisible beasts.

Charles seized a gun, Mr. Pinchard crept into the boat to hide under the benches, and Pierre looked round in such terror, that John said, pointing to a tall tree, " Up wi' thee, man, if thou wants another tussle wi' one of these chaps."

Pierre recollected his former adventure, however, and preferred the rear rank on safe ground, rather than be left to be attacked in a tree.

" Do not fire now, Charles," said Albert ; " it would be madness, and would bring the whole herd on us. Let us hope that we may escape without molestation. At all events, if defence be necessary, we must fire

together, that we may do some execution ; and remember, my good friends, to aim at the shoulder—we must strike the heart, not the impenetrable head.”

But the herd reached the river without paying any attention to the strangers, who soon heard the splash of the water and mingled roars and shrieks, which convinced them that other animals were also at the unlucky landing-place, and that a fierce combat was going on. Greatly alarmed for the event, they piled more fuel on the fire, remaining together in anxious watchfulness ; though, if they had not been deterred by considerations for their weaker companions, Charles and Albert, with the true spirit of sportsmen, would gladly have seen the fray.

“Listen to that deep and angry roar, Edmund,” said Charles ; “that is his majesty the forest king himself ; and there roars his gentle queen—no mean supporter of the regal power. If we had but a hiding-place, Albert, where we could look on and see fair play, it would be glorious. I have a few pewter bullets for those cowardly elephants, which are, I make no doubt, ten to one.”

“Stay where you are, young man,” said Dr. Cameron ; “for if you are seen, depend on it you will but have the alternative of being crushed to death by the foot of the larger animal, or crunched by the iron jaws of the fiercer king of the forest.”

“Oh ! Dr. Cameron,” shrieked Mr. Pinchard, “what will become of us ? Couldn’t we run away ?”

“There is nothing to prevent you from taking that sensible step, Mr. Pinchard,” replied the doctor ; “but I, and the rest of the party, shall certainly prefer to remain in our present safe and comfortable quarters.”

“But are we safe ?” asked the agitated man. “Mr.

Staunton, Mr. Beaumont, you understand the nature of these wild beasts ; will they attack us ?”

“ If you meet a lion by night, when he is in pursuit of prey,” answered Albert, “ you may be pretty certain he will attack you ; but an elephant rarely turns on man except he be infuriated by aggression. You are safe in this circle of fires, Mr. Pinchard.”

“ God help ye, man ! haud yer tongue,” exclaimed John, out of patience with the groaning of Mr. Pinchard ; “ folks might think ye were Prince Albert at the varra least, ye reckon so much o’ yoursel’.”

Mr. Pinchard sank down under the benches of the canoe, and wept in silence. He certainly did think that the life of Mr. Pinchard was of more consequence to him than that of the first monarch of the world.

They listened a few moments longer ; then the roars and yells were succeeded by a sound of rushing and trampling exceedingly alarming, and soon the gigantic elephants were seen striding across the plain to their retreat, with somewhat more speed than they had approached. Still the loud roars, mingled with low, deep yells, as if of agony, continued ; a sound of approaching steps was heard, and to the dismay of the watchers, a large lioness appeared with open jaws, furiously lashing her tail. She made directly towards the encampment, and blind with rage, and probably agonized by wounds, she appeared to be more irritated still by the sight of the fires ; and all saw they must act on the defensive to save themselves. They waited till she was within twenty yards of them, then the first three fired, and she fell, as they thought, mortally wounded ; but she sprung up again, and in another moment would have been in the circle, but the reserve party sent a volley into her head, and she fell dead.

After waiting a few moments breathlessly, and charging their guns again, they found the animal lay motionless, and were thankful for their narrow escape. The women looked in terror from the tent, where they had sought a feeble shelter: Pierre was found stretched in the canoe, and Mr. Pinchard was missing; but as it was supposed he was probably only hid among the bushes behind, no time was lost in searching for him; but several of the strongest men drew the huge body of the lioness to some distance from the camp, as it was not desirable to be so near the grand entertainment which the spoil would form for the hyænas, jackals, and wild dogs of the woods. It was not long before the noisy company assembled, squabbling loudly over their feast, but, fortunately, too amply provided for to have any necessity to seek farther rations that night, or Mr. Pinchard might really have fallen a victim; for, as soon as morning broke, the kind-hearted Africans tracked him for about a hundred yards down the river, and discovered him running wildly amongst the trees, distracted by the thought that he was still pursued by the lioness. So greatly was the poor man exhausted, when the sight of his dark-skinned friends awoke him from his delusion, that they had actually to carry him to the camp, and Dr. Cameron was compelled to prepare him a composing draught, before he could be moved.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Destruction of the Canoe. The serious Losses. Building a Raft. The Weaver-bird. The Launch. The Charge of the Hippopotamus. The lamentable Catastrophe. The Landing and Interment. The Night Conflict.

As the travellers were anxious to depart from this lion-haunted spot, they made a hasty breakfast, and while the able hands carried the boat and tent, the rest walked after them towards the landing-place. Before they reached the river, they came upon the remains of the spouse of the monarch of the forest, half devoured by her four-footed subjects.

Captain Stockport then preceded the party through the opening in the bushes to the muddy shore, trampled by the gigantic feet of the elephants; but suddenly he stopped, with a loud whistle, which Marshall well interpreted to signify surprise and vexation.

Great, indeed, was the consternation of the whole party, when they beheld the pretty canoe overwhelmed, crushed, and shattered. They lifted up the wreck, and beneath it lay the small remains of the valuable freight,—while skin bags, torn to atoms, ladies' and gentlemen's garments, treated with equal contempt, were rent and scattered around. The neatly-packed meat, bread, and vegetables, were all devoured, or trampled in the mud; a single bag of flour, wedged under one of the benches, with two canisters of powder, and a quantity of ball, secured in a rude locker, were all that had escaped destruction.

Tears, sobs, and lamentations burst from the deeply-afflicted women, as they regarded their losses.

"Hélas, Hélas !" exclaimed Angeline, "de pretty cap ! de robe sharming !—all is lost ! behold only de bag of night, dat I carry away. I demand mush pardon, Mees Maude, dat I abandon all to de vilains monstres. Behold us widout toilette."

"We will sew skins together and weave grass robes, Angeline," said Margaret ; "you are ingenious, and will help us to make a new wardrobe : besides here are some useful fragments. See, Norah has dragged a whole petticoat and half a muslin robe from the mud ; let us search for more spoil, and then wash it in the river."

"Is it washing, you say, Miss Marget, mavourneen?" said Norah ; "it's little ye know : see this, now ! sure it's not the wather, if it would be the blessed Shannon itself, that would bring Miss Maude's bohar togidder, in regard to them brute bastes' making a male of it."

It was a distressing fact that Maude's valuable sable boa had been vengefully gnawed to pieces by some very distant relations of the family that had formerly been robbed of it.

"Don't talk about your furbelows, my dears," said Captain Stockport, "you must learn to manage without them ; but the boat ! Mr. Marshall,—what do you say in this matter ?"

"My say is soon said, captain," answered he. "We cannot all sail in one canoe, let alone any provision-room. I suppose none would like to be left behind ; we must therefore either take to the land again, or build another boat ; here's material enough."

"But the tools, Marshall?" exclaimed Mrs. Churchill, "the carpenter's tools are gone."

This was indeed a catastrophe, and dismay sat on every countenance, till Margaret cried out, "I do believe, Dick, I see your tool-bag at the bottom of the river."

Dick was at the spot in a minute, and groaned deeply as he looked through the clear water. "Sure enough, miss,—bless your bonny sharp eyes," said he,—"there it lies, and little will I mind diving to fetch it up; but, then, what sort of a state will they be in, after lying all night under water."

Fortunately the river in this part was smooth, and not so deep but that the bag was drawn up by a hook attached to a line. Still better; after a careful inspection, Dick discovered, to his great content, that his saws and axes had not suffered, as he dreaded, from their immersion, so impervious was the strong buffalo-hide bag, and so firmly had he secured the mouth.

It was soon decided, that if the damaged canoe could not be repaired, another should be built, that they might continue their voyage; but all were anxious for a removal from this evening promenade of the mighty lords of the forest; they therefore stowed their baggage, now unfortunately portable enough, on board their boat, and set out to explore the banks of the river for a quieter locality. After rowing half a mile down the banks, they were arrested by the beauty of the spot they had reached. The turf was green and soft, the grass being shorter and finer than at their resting-place on the preceding night, while lofty timber-trees and gorgeous flowers, new to the travellers, charmed by their brilliance and fragrance. The banks of the river rose at this place many feet above the water, a circumstance which, though it would make the

embarkation difficult, promised them security from the animals that nightly frequented the river.

"This must be our resting-place," said Edmund, looking with admiration at the rich variety of plants ; and still more attracted, when from a tall willow he saw suspended innumerable nests of the *Loxia pensilis*—the weaver-bird—formed like purses, woven of grass and feathers, with a small opening at the side, from which the familiar little creatures looked out on their strange visitors.

"I reckon this place might suit as well as any other," said Dick, examining the timber-trees professionally.

"By all means let us pitch our tent here," said Charles ; "I see no fiercer animals than a herd of springboks at a distance, and the high banks will guard us from even the ancient inhabitants of the river, the crocodile and the hippopotamus."

Captain Stockport and Marshall were discontented with the awkward rocky banks ; but Dr. Cameron pronounced that if they were to be detained some days, it would be prudent to select a situation elevated above the river, where they might escape the danger of the miasma so common in the low and marshy lands of this region, and this opinion decided the question.

The sound boat was placed to form one side of a square, and the young and active soon fenced the remainder with thorny bushes. The tent was pitched, and the slender remains of property neatly arranged. The cooking-utensils, with the bags which contained their night toilet, and usually formed their pillows, had been brought up the preceding night. They had also brought a bag of biscuit, of which the greatest

part remained, and this, with the rescued bag of flour, was all that was saved of their abundant provision. But they seemed to be in a region of plenty, had their arms, and a good stock of ammunition, and with cheerful hearts they resigned themselves to a disappointment which was especially felt by Mr. Grey and Mrs. Churchill.

Then Dick and his able assistants, without loss of time, set to work to cut down trees suitable for the purpose, the trunks were stripped and smoothed, and then joined together, to form a raft rather than a boat, as more convenient, and more easily completed. Across these trunks were laid broad split canes, and all were firmly tied together with the tough stems of a luxuriant creeper. The mast was formed of the slender trunk of a yew-tree, which abounded near the shores, and a sail, woven of grass by the young ladies, completed the raft. On the deck, as it might be called, an awning was made by raising the tent-cover on poles, which afforded shelter by night and day to the females; and paddles, broad at the lower end, were made for propelling the heavy craft. This raft promised to be a pleasant and convenient vessel, so long as the river was deep and wide enough to float it; but Marshall was somewhat dissatisfied, as he had ever clung to the first plan of the narrow light canoe for river-voyaging.

It was a week before the great work was completed, and during that time Albert and Charles, with a small expense of powder and shot, had brought in an eland and two rheeboks, or pallahs; while Mataban and Soosoobe had killed several couples of guinea-fowls and wild ducks with their arrows, besides rifling the nests, and procuring stores of eggs. A fresh stock

of biscuits, made from the bag of flour saved from the wreck, was baked in an iron frying-pan. The new boat would thus be well provisioned.

The tattered garments, torn by the wild beasts, certainly taxed the ingenuity of the sempstresses ; but with some labour they were able to obtain a few changes from the precious fragments. Mr. Pinchard's loss had been heaviest ; for through all perils, he had till this time preserved a handsome supply of linen, made up and presented to him by fair relatives in England, and he bitterly bemoaned his privation. To add to his distress, he seemed to be the particular object of the attacks of the mosquitoes. They were numerous and annoying to every one ; but certainly Mr. Pinchard was their chief victim. His face was swollen and disfigured with their irritating bites, and night and day he was followed by swarms of the blood-thirsty insects.

"It is very hard on me," said he ; "and I think, Miss Julia, it is not very pretty of you to laugh at me, when I'm as nearly mad as any man can be ; and you haven't got so much as a spot on your face. And I do think Dr. Cameron might find something to drive them off, some of those musks or strong scents ; if he doesn't, I know I shall be eaten up entirely, or else I shall run mad among the beasts, like Nebuchadnezzar, who might, perhaps, have had a swarm of these fiendish wretches sent to punish him. God forgive me for saying so."

"I hope God will forgive you, Mr. Pinchard," said Mr. Grey ; "for it is dangerous to place your own interpretation on holy writ. I do not think perfumes will banish these irritating insects ; it is probable that smearing the skin with oil or fat, the practice of the

natives, may be more effectual. Let me recommend you to apply to Norah for some of the melted fat of the eland, just killed, and keep your face constantly anointed with it."

Unpleasant as this mode of defence was, Mr. Pinchard was glad to submit to it, and henceforward appeared with his face perpetually shining with the application, which, though certainly successful in banishing the plagues, kept his friends also at a respectful distance, as the odour of the animal oil was somewhat offensive.

Once more all was ready for embarkation ; the raft had been built close to the banks of the river where they were lowest, and the willows and mangroves in the way were cut down. Then, by using levers, the ponderous construction was launched, and after plunging about with a mighty tumult for some minutes, it finally floated on the smooth water with perfect success, to the great delight of the artificers. After contemplating the work of their hands for a little time, and receiving the approbation of Captain Stockport, all hands were called on to lade,—no difficult task now, for each could easily carry his own property.

Dick declaring he would never more part with his precious tools while he had life, slung the bag on his back. The cooking-utensils, bags of biscuits, and baskets of cooked meats, with the small remains of honey and coffee, were placed under the tent. Beyond this, there were only the arms, the ammunition, and the few garments that escaped the ravages of the savage beasts.

Then the light canoe was launched, and attached to the stern of the raft for fear of accidents ; but as

soon as the safe and easy sailing of the raft was ascertained, the female passengers were anxious to leave their cramped position in the canoe, and ascend the broad deck of Dick's ark, as they named it. The progress continued to be slow and steady for some hours; the river then narrowed, the mangroves spread over the banks, even into the water, and the navigation became difficult. Maude and her maid Angeline, with the African women and children, who were wholly unaccustomed to the water, were the most timid; they shrunk from the pendent branches, screamed when the raft rolled over some rock hidden below the water, and at length chose to return to the boat, which Charles and Marshall undertook to row, and steer out of the way of the offending branches.

But they had not long been seated, when a tremendous shock was felt; the light canoe was thrown above the water, and capsized in a moment; and Albert, who was standing at the stern of the raft, watching the boat, saw, to his great horror, the huge head of a hippopotamus raised above the water, preparing to seize the canoe with its red open mouth. Calling for aid, he seized his gun, and fired in the face of the ferocious beast, which, with terrific roars, dived down and disappeared.

In a moment Albert, John, Dick, and even Dr. Cameron, plunged into the water to aid the unfortunate sufferers from the accident; Captain Stockport would have followed, but was forcibly held by Mr. Grey and Mrs. Churchill, who would not permit such a rash attempt at his age. Charles and Marshall, excellent swimmers, soon rose and clung to the canoe, grasping Maude and Canga, the wife of Mataban; the other women and children were brought up by the

bold divers, and all placed in an insensible state on the raft. All were soon recovered except Oolalie, the wife of Soosoobe, who had remained in the water till the last, and was brought up by John, with her infant clasped to her breast; but both were dead. The violent shock had thrown them upon a sharp rock, and a fatal blow on the head had destroyed the mother. The length of time they had been in the water had severed the frail thread of the infant's life. The despair of the rough African, Soosoobe, was terrible to behold; he refused to hear consolation, and withdrawing from all, he lay down on his face mute, and half-senseless.

The confusion on the now crowded raft was very great; the canoe, drawn on deck, was found so shattered by the furious animal, that it must undergo repair before it was available, and at present there was no time to attend to it. Cloaks, blankets, and such spare garments as the scanty wardrobe afforded, were supplied to those who had been in the water; and Dr. Cameron, who had fortunately preserved his little store of medicines and instruments, attended to such as needed his care; and after tranquillity had been in some measure restored, the question of the mode of disposing of the unfortunate dead arose.

"I firmly believe they were true Christians," said Mr. Grey; "and I cannot consent to consign their bodies to the water, to find a sepulchre in the jaws of some voracious beast. I must therefore entreat of you to land us, Captain Stockport, that I may, according to the rites of the Church, give dust to dust."

"We are accustomed, Mr. Grey," said Captain Stockport, "in our life on the ocean, to commit our

dead brethren to its waters, not only as an act of necessity but from the knowledge that no distinction will be made between the buried of the land and the ocean, on that awful day when 'the sea shall give up her dead.' "

"But, Captain Stockport," said Miss Keenmark, "the wishes of the unfortunate husband and father must be consulted. I will once more try my influence over him ;" and, taking the weeping little Nina by the hand, she approached the mourner, and said, in a commanding tone in his own tongue, "Rise, Soosoobe; God calls on you to rise and live."

He raised his head, looked on the child with a painful expression of countenance, then rose, and said, "What would you have me do, woman of great knowledge? Why must I live when she is gone away? May I not follow my Oolalie? Why does the great God give life, to let the Imfooboo take it away? Why do the white men make kraals on the water, and leave the forest and the green grass? Do they seek death?"

"Remember, Soosoobe," said Miss Keenmark, "that all these sorrows which the merciful Father sends to his children on earth are trials of their faith, that they may believe that the Christian's home and rest are in that bright heaven where the dead meet again to live for ever. The sorrow of our good teacher Mr. Grey has drawn him nearer to God. Your kind friend Mrs. Churchill has laid her only son in the grave, and may never meet her husband again till that blessed hereafter. I have lost parents, brothers, sisters—all who loved me, and whom I loved tenderly; yet I did not desire to follow them, for I knew God had given me work to do before I died. Now I have learnt to love dearly all those whose trials I have shared. I

loved the gentle and innocent creature whom He has called to her rest ; and I love this dear child, whom you also love, and must live and care for. Now kneel down, Soosoobe, and pray to God to forgive you your despair. Then we will seek a quiet grave for the body of Oolalie, and Mr. Grey will bury her, with prayers that we may all meet again in heaven."

The poor man quietly obeyed his friendly monitor ; he prayed for pardon and strength, and found them : then firmly walking to the spot where the body was lying, now arrayed decently by friendly hands in the white robe, figurative of the blessed hope of the faithful, he wept for a short time over the bier, and turning to Mr. Grey, he said, " Now, good man, say prayers, and make a bed in the forest for my Oolalie."

They prepared to moor the heavy raft beneath the spreading mangroves, which formed a complete jungle extending into the water, while along the muddy banks stood files of birds—the gorgeous flamingo, the elegant crested crane, the dark-coloured goose, and the white spoonbill—feeding on worms and small fish, and heedless of the presence of man. But as they drew near the bank, a herd of hippopotami, forcing their way through the jungle, and dispersing the feathered flocks, plunged with loud snorts and open jaws into the river, with such tumult, that the strong raft shook with the agitation of the water ; and the voyagers were truly thankful they were not in the fragile canoe, which must have been engulfed in the whirlpool formed by the monstrous beasts, which raised their frightful heads above the water, as if to examine more closely the bold intruders on their domains.

There was of course a great amount of shrieking at this sight, and a unanimous decision that this was not

a favourable landing-place. Albert flashed a charge of powder towards the dangerous creatures, which dived below the surface, and then rising again, swam up the river. The voyagers continued their course half a mile lower down, and selected a spot where the jungle was less entangled than usual. Here they made fast the raft ; and after the plain beyond the mangoes had been carefully examined, they all landed, bearing with them the body of Oolalie. Then selecting a flowery spot beneath a spreading mimosa, a deep grave was dug, and all gathering round it, Mr. Grey performed the solemn and beautiful burial-service, and, amidst the tears of Europeans and Africans, the mother and babe were interred. The grave was then filled up, and covered with stones, to protect it from the wild beasts.

After this solemn event, they consulted whether they should proceed onward ; and even Captain Stockport agreed that it would not be advisable to continue the voyage by night, among the innumerable hippopotami that thronged the river at this place ; and he proposed that they should encamp on shore on the quiet plain where they had landed, which seemed in every way favourable for the purpose. This place might rather be called a forest than a plain ; for many tall timber-trees were scattered over it, while here and there lay impenetrable thickets. A range of low hills at the north shut out the farther prospect ; and the ground was covered with tall grass, which had no marks of being trodden down by animals.

"What a charming scene for a settlement !" said Julia. "If we had but dear papa here, and Hubert, and our dear friend Captain Elliott, and Mr. Grey's lost family. I should like to have a pretty village built, which we would name *Sans Souci*, where we

would live and spend our time among birds and flowers, like the Fays of Fairy-land."

"Would that be fulfilling the duties which God created us all to perform?" asked Mr. Grey.

"But we might seek out more wandering ignorant Africans, Mr. Grey," said Margaret; "we should fulfil a duty if we taught them to love God and dwell in peace with their fellow-creatures, and to work as we work; for I know dear Julia would soon be tired of flowers and idleness only."

"I should certainly not object to such a plan," said Miss Keenmark; "if we do not succeed in extricating ourselves from these bewildering forests. My own ambition has long been to become a teacher, like good Mr. Grey. I earnestly desire to see the children of the desert enlightened as the children of society. I have an acquaintance, orally, with the language of the wild tribes; but to communicate knowledge we ought to be prepared with books."

"Books, my dear madam," said Albert, "may aid; but they do not accomplish civilization and knowledge. You are a scholar, and you must remember that the ancient philosophers of Greece, who were followed by crowds of devoted and attached disciples, did not so much write books, as speak wisdom."

"A still more striking example may be found," said Mr. Grey, "in the oral teaching of our blessed Saviour. The Founder of the Christian Faith needed not books when he declared the pure doctrines of true religion as simply to the unlettered fishermen as to the learned scribes."

"But, begging your pardon, sir," said Marshall, "I hope you'll find no scholars yet a bit. We should be hardly strong enough to stand against a horde of them

fierce fellows with their assegais ; and to tell you the truth, I fancy this is far too canny a spot to have been overlooked by them. It would take some preaching and some time before you could get them to behave themselves like Christian folks."

"Mr. Marshall is right, Mr. Grey," said Captain Stockport ; "I admire your enthusiasm ; but there is a time for all things. These people must be civilized by detachments, not by hordes. We are in no plight to meet an enemy just now ; but this is a quiet-looking harbour, so we must just be prudent, and keep our eyes open."

The first act of prudence was to remove all the lading from the raft, except the broken canoe, which they did not propose to repair that night. The clumsy raft was left on the river, to the mercy of the hippopotami, but moored by a strong cable to the mangroves, and, at all events, out of the reach of the elephants and lions.

The spot selected for the encampment was beneath a fine fig-tree, behind which rose a thicket of the shrub called by the Dutch settlers *Wagt een beetj*, or "Wait-a-bit," the barbed thorns of which are so lacerating, that even the thick-skinned rhinoceros does not willingly force its way through it. This thicket they beat round with great care, and were satisfied that it did not contain beast or reptile. The red cloth of Diego was spread over the long grass to save them from the night dews, the tent was pitched, a large stock of fuel was collected, a circle of fires built and lighted, and supper prepared. To this succeeded the evening devotions, after which all went to rest but the first watch.

The fires blazed cheerfully. Though the night was a tropical one, the air felt chill after the scorching heat of

the day, and Charles and Mataban, the first sentinels, wrapped their cloaks around them as they sat down under the shade of the tree, surrounded by their friends, all buried in deep slumber. To prevent drowsiness, Charles engaged the African to relate some terrific tales of encounters with buffaloes and lions, and soon became greatly interested in the details. Suddenly the narrator paused, and listened with that keen sense of hearing so peculiar to the savage. The next moment he pressed the arm of Charles, uttering, as if involuntarily, a low hissing sound, made a signal for silence, and pointed to the south near the river.

Charles bent forward to listen, and heard a low rustling sound at some distance ; but as nothing could be seen, he hastily concluded that it must be caused by the monstrous boa, or the deadly cobra, and was springing up for some weapon of defence ; but Mataban drew him gently back, completely beneath the shade of the tree, and whispered, "The Mantatees come !"

Charles started ; he was brave and fearless when alone, but he looked round, and remembered the feeble and the infirm of the party ; and he could not but feel, that if the savages surrounded them, hope would be vain. A few brief low words passed ; then Mataban walked forward, affecting to be unconcerned, to put fresh fuel on the fires, while Charles softly waked up the available force, and communicated Mataban's suspicions. A hasty plan of defence was arranged, all were armed, ready, and anxious for the event ; some hoping Mataban might be deceived—others fearing that an attack was but too probable. The suspense was not long : as Mataban was bending over the fires, an assegai, directed with skilful aim, whizzed through the air ; but his eye had caught the glitter in the

grass, and the instant it was flung he sprung back, and escaped inevitable death, for the sharp weapon passed the spot on which he had stood, and buried itself in a tree beyond.

The brave little band formed a line before the tent, ready to discharge their pieces as soon as the foe presented a front. There was a dead pause for a moment, then the moon broke forth, and showed them at least fifty men springing from the long grass, where they had been hidden, and poising their assegais for action; but before they could hurl them, or take their shields, which lay in the grass, the little phalanx poured a volley, which struck down three men, wounded several, and put all to flight, howling with dismay, over the hills, carrying off their dead and wounded.

"On! on!" cried Captain Stockport; "capture the shields and arms; let us have some trophies!"

Onward rushed the conquerors to the field, and they returned laden with the spoils of victory, to meet the agitated women, who had been roused in terror by the noise of the conflict.

Several sheaves of assegais were collected. The shields, of an oval form, about four feet high, were made of the skins of animals, and in the inside of each, fixed upright in the middle, were several long broad spears, with stout wooden handles. With these shields the ground was strewed, and they made several expeditions to bring them all in, that they might use them to defend the camp in case they should be prevented from embarking in the morning; for there was every reason to fear they were in the immediate neighbourhood of a horde intent on blood and plunder, and on the watch to intercept them on their way to the river.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Once more cast away. The March on Foot. The Ant-lion. The recovered Boat. An Attack and a Conflagration. The Raft abandoned for the Canoe. New Acquaintance, and a Visit to an African Kraal.

ALL night the watch was kept, but there was no more disturbance ; and as soon as day broke, Albert and Charles set out to reconnoitre the path to the landing-place, which had been the field of battle. They found the grass, even to the shore, much trampled, but supposed the hippopotami had been sporting on the banks ; they descended to the water, and, to their great consternation, saw no trace of the raft. They would willingly have believed at first that they had mistaken the spot ; but the traces of the landing remained on the muddy shore, mingled, however, with the footsteps of the unshod barbarians ; the marks of the rough cable on the bark of the tree around which it had been wound might still be seen ; but this cable had been removed, and was, doubtless, sufficiently attractive to the robbers to induce them to carry it off, and suffer the raft, which contained no freight, to float down the stream.

If the whole party had been equally strong and swift of foot, they might have hoped to overtake the cumbrous raft, the stream moving slowly at this part over its level bed ; but long grass, jungles, and thickets, were fearful impediments to female travellers, and Mr. Grey's infirmity rendered rapid motion impossible ; there was, moreover, the dread of encountering the

savages on the banks of the river. All these difficulties the two friends discussed as they returned to report this new misfortune, and to overwhelm the helpless portion of the voyagers with deep distress.

"We must set out to walk, Captain Stockport," said Margaret; "and Mr. Grey must be carried in a litter, as Diego was when we crossed the karroo."

"Let him be borne on the shields of the conquered," said Julia; and her plan was not rejected. Two of the light and strong shields were nailed together, and slung by straps over the oars which had formed the tent-poles. Soft grass, covered with the useful cloth carpet, formed a cushion, and thus a convenient litter was formed, which Mr. Grey was reluctantly compelled to occupy. Then each prepared to carry a knapsack, or some troublesome burthen, and they sighed at the change from their pleasant sail on the smooth river. Strong boots were resumed, baskets of provisions packed, the tent rolled up, and Mr. Grey being placed in his litter, carried by Pierre, Diego, Mataban, and Soosoobe, the procession began to move.

Dick and Marshall, armed with axes, went first, as pioneers and leaders; Captain Stockport and Charles followed, well armed; then came the litter and the women, attended by Dr. Cameron, Mr. Pinchard, and Edmund; while Albert and John formed the rear-guard.

The morning air was fresh and pure, and, urged by fear, all went on at a brisk pace, avoiding as much as they could the thickets and jungles, but carefully examining the river, along the banks of which they travelled, for traces of the lost raft. More than once the party were arrested by the sight of a herd of elegant giraffes, raising their long necks, and pro-

truding their curious tongues to gather into their mouths the leaves of the upper branches of a tree which Edmund pronounced to be the *Acacia Giraffæ*.

"If I had but an opportunity of examining its beautiful head!" said he. "How easy it would be to shoot the creature which has approached so near us, Charles."

"And thereby give a signal to those Mantatees or Wanketzens, who seem to thirst for our blood," said Mrs. Churchill. "Let the giraffe live, Edmund; and mind your steps, or you will destroy the labours of an ant-lion."

It was provoking that this den should have escaped the notice of Edmund's scientific eye; and Miss Keenmark and he paused a few minutes to regard with interest the little funnel-shaped trap of the ingenious insect, which, Nature having formed to walk backward, and with slow motion, is unable to pursue its fleet prey; but, in recompense for this inertness, it is gifted by Providence with strong jaws, with which it digs a pit, and conceals itself at the bottom to seize the ants that slide into it, and suck the juice from them through its hollow jaws.

Great were the lamentations of Norah that the young ladies had to carry heavy baskets filled with provision, and with "the cups, and the spoons, and the silver taypot;" but every one who was willing was called upon to be useful. Still, though they had taken a short rest at mid-day, before evening came on, the good-natured girls began to be very weary; and Mrs. Churchill leaned heavily on the arm of good Dr. Cameron, whose cheerful words encouraged her to hope.

"Depend on it, madam," said he, "we shall come

upon our stray boat soon. Observe how the river is narrowed, and the encroaching mangroves spread into the waters. We shall certainly find the raft entrapped; and then, defying the hippopotami, we will take our night's rest upon it, rather than waste more powder and shot on those audacious robbers, who are, I make no doubt, at our heels."

"You don't say so, Dr. Cameron!" cried out Mr. Pinchard, making a bound forward, and passing through the ranks to the front.

Marshall and Albert cast many uneasy glances to the north and west, and sometimes even fancied they saw dark figures moving among the trees, or the smoke rising from some savage bivouac; and as night drew on, their anxiety increased. But before it was quite dark, a cheerful whistle from the pioneers announced some news. All pressed forward and found Dick and Marshall vigorously at work with their axes, cutting through the thick jungle to the river. In a few minutes they had cleared a path and leaped upon the lost raft, which had drifted into a small cove, where it had been held by the spreading roots of the mangrove.

The water was fortunately smooth, and the pioneers found the craft quite uninjured; even the disabled canoe lay upon it untouched; but the paddles were removed either by the savages, or by accidentally encountering some obstacle in floating down the stream. It was necessary to repair this loss, and while Captain Stockport and Marshall, mounted on deck, freed the raft from the mangroves, and moored it with a rope belonging to the tent, Dick once more landed to look out for timber for the new paddles.

While Dick was at work, several figures were

seen, one after another, to rise above the ridge of some low hills, not three hundred yards from the shore. A moment sufficed to show they were armed warriors, and in great numbers. "To the raft! to the raft!" cried Albert, and the women, in haste and terror, scrambled upon their only refuge, followed by Mr. Grey and his bearers. The assegais began to whizz through the air, and before the fugitives had recourse to their guns, Marshall sprung from the raft with a blazing branch of thorn which he had lighted, and flung it among the long dry grass between the approaching savages and the river. In a moment the grass blazed up fiercely. "Now is our time," cried he; and all seized the moment to embark. Then with the oars they shoved off the raft, and rowing and drifting, glided slowly down the river, gazing on the wondrous scene before them.

A breeze from the south-west spread the flames rapidly, the burning grass fired the thickets, and from thence spread to the lofty trees, which were scattered round, and gave the plains the appearance of a forest. Vast branches fell down, and carried the destruction onwards; the whole scene presented one mighty conflagration, before which the dismayed and defeated warriors dispersed, like a flying army, over the hills. It was a sublime and terrible spectacle: the crackling of the burnt wood,—the cries of the birds driven from their nests and young,—the howls of the enraged beasts, some of which were seen madly to rush into the flames,—struck all with silent awe.

All at once the wind changed to the west, the rushing flames fled before it through the dense thickets, and the wooded banks of the river, while the lofty forest-trees, wrapped in flames, shone through the

thick dark smoke with a grandeur that few have ever seen, and no pencil could ever depict. As the raft slowly drifted down the stream, the devouring flames followed its course ; the jungle along the banks and the spreading mangroves blazed, and burning branches and showers of sparks fell on deck, threatening destruction.

"It was a presumptuous deed, Mr. Marshall," said Mr. Grey ; "and this wanton destruction of God's works may have brought down His wrath upon us."

"It was an act of defence, Mr. Grey," said Captain Stockport ; "and God permits us to destroy, when it is needful for the safety of our own lives, or the lives of others."

"Moreover it is infinitely better than the dreadful necessity of shedding human blood," said Mrs. Churchill ; "which I trust we shall, in this case, escape."

Albert, with the assistance of Dick and Marshall, erected a sort of canopy of the shields which had formed the litter, supported by the poles, which in some measure protected them from the blazing fragments which were cast upon them ; and they succeeded in rowing towards the opposite bank, to escape the heat and sparks.

Still the flames ran along the shores ; the hippopotami, roused from their sleep in the jungles, with hideous roars rushed into the water, dashing it in torrents over the raft, and shaking the heavy fabric as if it had been a toy-boat ; but fortunately it remained unswamped, and the beasts dived and rose at a distance, without molesting them.

They then resolved to hoist a sail ; for though there was danger in such an attempt in the darkness,

there was still more danger in lingering near the burning jungle. The breeze was strong, and the river deep and smooth, and in half an hour they had left the conflagration far behind them, though they still saw the smoke and red light in the distance.

A feeling of gratitude sprung in every heart ; Mr. Grey called his little congregation round him to offer a thanksgiving to Almighty God, who had saved them so signally from the spear of the foe and the fire of the forest. "May He in whose hands are life and death," said the good man, "protect us from the perils that still surround us ! And should we be mercifully brought into a haven of safety, never, my children, let the remembrance of your deliverance in this night of terror fade from your minds. In the moment of temptation, let it rise in warning ; in the moment of doubt, let it shine forth, the star of your faith."

It had been, indeed, a night of terror, and gladly the voyagers hailed the first beams of day, which enabled them to examine the scenes they were passing. But new difficulties now assailed them, for the river had again become narrow, the banks high and precipitous ; and large rocks rising above the water showed the impossibility of proceeding lower in the raft. From the first appearance of light, Dick had been busily engaged in examining the canoe, and now, seeing the perplexity of Marshall and Captain Stockport, he said, "Please, captain, just to order an anchor to be dropped, till I can rig up this here craft a bit. She's jeist the boat for this queer water ; and them as cannot find a place in her must steer along the shores."

This plan promised some hope, though it involved the necessity of separation, very painful to the weaker

party. Moreover, there was danger on the shore ; but it was agreed the raft should be moored, and continue to be their dwelling till the repairs of the canoe were completed.

It was necessary, however, that Dick and his workmen should land to procure willows and light timber for their work, and though the raft-party at first submitted patiently to sit on the water gazing through the mangroves on the high waving grass and bright flowers on the plain, yet there was something dismal in this harbour beneath the dark mangrove, with its labyrinth of interwoven roots, from which there seemed no escape. It was a prison on the dark, dull water, and they were at length glad to seek the shore, from terror at the sight of an immense crocodile, which had raised its frightful head above the water, while the rest of his body was hidden, and lay motionless, while his glaring eyes were fixed, probably watching for some unwary animal coming to drink.

Even Mrs. Churchill could not endure this sight, and fear of the crocodile was stronger than the dread of the savages ; the reptile might have been scared by the discharge of a gun, but this was a hazard not to be thought of ; and therefore the whole party landed, but remained, under the shade of a large willow, as near the river as the jungle would permit.

"Do not let us be idle," said Margaret. "See what beautiful dry grass ; let us collect some to plait for hats, which we all need much."

This was a fact not to be disputed ; and, while strong arms wielded the axe and the saw, the lighter labours were carried on briskly by the women, Mr. Pinchard, as usual, sharing the easiest employment, and with needle and thread repairing his own large hat.

So busily were they engaged, that they did not, till they were near at hand, observe the approach of several native women, wearing no garment except a short petticoat of woven grass, and carrying in their hands osier baskets. Mr. Pinchard was the first to spring up, rush through the bushes, and with one bound to leap upon the raft, to the excessive amusement of the more courageous girls, who, seeing only a small unarmed party of women, gladly stepped forward to make acquaintance with them.

Some of the women had infants slung over their shoulders, while, at the same time, they carried baskets, containing fowls, pumpkins, and onions ; and they even brought milk in a closely-woven osier vessel. With one hand they offered these things to the strangers, while they extended the other for payment, thus showing that they were acquainted with the principle of traffic, and that their intentions were peaceful. The offerings were tempting, but, unfortunately, the means of payment were difficult. Money the travellers certainly possessed,—but here it would only be valued as metal ; clothes they had not to spare, and nails or iron tools were too useful to be parted with. However, the women themselves pointed out the mode of payment by demanding, in the Sichuana language common to the tribes, and now understood by most of the Europeans, the buttons from Captain Stockport's coat. This was by no means agreeable to the old commander ; but he consented to part with two, to purchase two couples of fowls. Margaret then remembered that she had still in her bag a parcel of the coloured beads brought from Elliott's waggon for the very purpose of conciliating the friendly tribes. These were produced, to the great admiration of the dark

women. Marshall undertook to regulate the terms of the market economically, and they were soon supplied with abundance of useful and welcome stores.

On inquiring for the husbands of their visitors, they were told the men were gone to drive the tribute cattle to the kraal of the chief, or king as they called him : this kraal was many hours distant over the hills. He was a good king ; and though they were compelled to pay him this tribute of cattle, yet he never massacred his subjects, or burnt their kraals, as the powerful and cruel king on the south of the river did ; and this river they seemed to regard as a natural defence, pointing out the opposite banks as dangerous ground.

The women watched with interest the plaiting of the grass, which they seemed to understand ; and when Margaret had repaired and restored to form a large hat, she placed it on the head of a young woman, to the great admiration of the rest, who immediately cried out for similar decorations ; and the workwomen found out, that if they could be speedily produced, hats would be a valuable article of barter ; therefore, having materials at hand for making new ones, two more hats were soon transferred to their dark-skinned visitors.

The women then earnestly pressed the strangers to visit their kraal, which they described to be behind the first range of hills. This expedition did not seem dangerous ; and Mr. Grey and his friend Miss Keenmark were anxious to see the social condition of the people, and to inquire into their knowledge of religious matters. As it would require some hours at least to repair the canoe, it was agreed that all the ladies and Mr. Grey, attended by Marshall and Albert, armed, should cross the hill, which was not more than two hundred yards from the landing-place, a distance that even

Mr. Grey could accomplish, with the support of a strong arm.

The girls listened to the tales of the women as they walked on,—terrible deeds of the great king of the south, of kraals burnt, and women and children butchered wantonly; even this quiet tribe, buried among the hills, trembled to think that the warriors of the tyrant might discover and slay them. They rarely engaged in war themselves, except when they had some quarrel with a neighbouring tribe. If they took any prisoners, they sent them down a great way to the coast at the south-east, where they were sold, and sent away in wooden houses over the sea.

This was rather an unpleasant revelation, and Margaret, though imperfectly acquainted with their language, endeavoured to convince the women that they had no right to sell their fellow-creatures for slaves; but they laughed, and said, that when their enemies were conquerors, their husbands and children were sold, and that they themselves, if taken prisoners when young and strong, would likewise be sold. Of the existence of the true God, and of a future state, they were wholly ignorant; they believed, however, in certain supernatural powers possessed by people who were looked on with awe and fear, and who were evidently shrewd impostors, who preyed on the timid and credulous.

The kraal or village was a circle of low osier huts, shaped like bee-hives and thatched with palm-leaves. The open entrance was so low, that it was necessary to stoop to pass into the house. A lofty palm-tree stood in the midst of this circle, round which were raised mounds of turf, on which several naked children were playing, who, when they saw the strangers, ran

with piercing cries into the huts. Some inclosed patches of ground round the huts were rudely tilled, and in them were growing maize, millet, onions, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, and other vegetables, while, at a few yards' distance, a large plot, fenced with thorns, contained a fine herd of cows.

Margaret and Norah were particularly delighted to see this approach to rural civilization ; nor was it less agreeable to Marshall, who secretly planned the sacrifice of every button on his best jacket to obtain supplies to "victual the ship." Margaret had the curiosity to enter the hut of one of her friends ; but it was so close and dark, and smelled so unpleasantly of raw hides and decomposed vegetables, that she was glad to get into the open air, where she found women employed round a large fire, on which was an iron pot. They were boiling beef, potatoes, and pumpkins into a sort of stew, which, though Soyer would hardly have approved of it, had a very agreeable smell when turned out into a large basket ; and the young ladies felt a strong desire to partake of it ; but they looked round in vain for any substitute for plate, knife, fork, or spoon.

Albert laughed at their distress, and Marshall and he, being provided with pocket-knives, cut some small pieces of beef and vegetables, and placed them on large leaves for their friends, before their hostesses had plunged their unwashed hands into the mess, and torn away portions for themselves and their children. The visitors were hungry, and had long since abandoned fastidiousness ; so they made a good dinner, with the addition of some coarse wheaten cakes, notwithstanding the rude fashion in which it was served.

After eating voraciously, the native women began a low monotonous song, which increased in rapidity as

they proceeded, till they became greatly excited, clapped their hands, and finally began to dance under the palm-tree, continuing the exercise till they were exhausted; nor could Canga resist the attraction of the amusement so much practised by the natives, but joined the dance, which, she said, was introduced in honour of the strangers. When they had concluded, and were reclining on the grass, Mr. Grey induced his young friends to sing a hymn, which astonished and delighted the natives.

Mr. Grey then addressed the women in the language he now spoke fluently. He told them that he was sent to them by the great God who had made them and all the world, to tell them that they ought to love Him, to do all that He wished them to do, and to pray to Him to make them worthy to live with Him for ever after death, in a bright world where there were no dangers, no wants, no sorrows, no evil people—where all would be brothers and love one another. He said the fair girls were praying to God when they sung so sweetly; now all the fair people would pray to God that their dark friends might become His children as they were.

Then the good priest kneeled down, and offered up a fervent prayer for the salvation of these ignorant heathens; and when the poor natives saw their visitors kneel and lift up their hands, they did the same, with a half-consciousness of performing a solemn duty. When Mr. Grey had concluded his prayer, he put some questions to the women, and found they partly comprehended his teaching, and had some desire to hear more of the new and wonderful truth he had announced to them.

“Would it not be right,” said Miss Keenmark, “to

remain on shore at least another day, that the good seed thus scattered may not perish for want of nurture."

"God will water the seed, and cause it to fructify in his own good time, my dear madam," said Mr. Grey. "Our duty at present is to persevere in our endeavours safely and speedily to reach the coast. Even now we must return, lest we alarm our friends."

"Moreover," observed Albert, "we are not absolutely certain of the peaceable disposition of the mates of our hospitable entertainers, and it would be more prudent to receive them at our own camp than to wait their return with such a slender and inefficient force."

Yielding to this counsel, they took leave of the women with many kind and instructive words, inviting them to visit the camp next morning before they sailed, to receive the valuable gift of some needles.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A Visit from the Men of the Kraal. Religious Instruction. Soosoo's Request. The Rapids or the Savages. A visit to another Savage Kraal. Chinguava's offer. An African Repast.

WHEN the party returned to the encampment, they found the workmen doubtful whether they should be able to finish the canoe till next day, and the elder ladies looked forward with some trepidation to a visit from the men of the kraal. Very little rest was obtained that night, for the raft and the canoe required watching, and all were disturbed by anxiety for the future. Early morning showed them a large body of Africans approaching from the hills; they prepared to receive their visitors in a friendly manner, but took care to form a line to guard the raft and canoe, and to have their arms at hand in case they should be needed.

When the procession drew near they saw first about fifty tall, stout men, with the usual Bechuana features and complexion, having *karosses* of leopard or jackal skin hanging from their shoulders; they wore a sort of sandal attached to the sole of the foot, and each carried a spear with the point downward; but they had no assegais or shields.

The women followed with baskets of corn and vegetables as before. One man wore a round tuft of black ostrich feathers on his head, and was apparently a petty chief, for he headed the party; and therefore arshall and Albert, as a deputation, went forward to address him, unarmed, and holding out their hands in

the English fashion. This greeting seemed to please the chief, who grasped and shook their hands, saying, "*Inglis, Inglis*," which satisfied them that he had previously encountered their countrymen.

Albert addressed him in the Sichuana dialect, telling him they were travellers making their way down the river to the coast, where they expected to meet friends; that they wished much to have a guide, whom they would pay with cloth and beads, knives and scissors, when they reached the settlement, and he asked the chief if they might safely continue to sail down the river.

The chief replied, that the way was very long, the river winding south-east, that it swarmed with crocodiles and hippopotami, that there were also many rocks and bars of sand; above all, on both sides of the river were tribes of fierce warriors, who robbed and murdered all who fell into their hands, or carried them to the Portuguese settlements to sell for slaves. He related, that many, many moons before, he had himself been taken prisoner, carried to Inhambane, and sold; but an English ship had anchored off the coast, and the good captain had ransomed him, given him spades and knives, and sent him away free. Then he had made his way home to his family, who had believed him to be dead; and he told the king all the wonders he had seen, and showed him the gifts of the English captain, whereupon the king made him a chief. He knew by their pale faces that the strangers must be *Inglis*, and none of his people should do them harm; but he could not give them a guide to face such dangers.

All were greatly depressed by the words of the chief; still they must go on, therefore Marshall began

to trade with the people for provisions, and succeeded in purchasing with a few buttons and beads two young bullocks ; and from the chief he obtained a tolerable chart of the route to Inhambane, which he found lay considerably south of the latitude in which they now were.

In the mean time Norah had made a kettle of coffee and milk, and some cakes of a more delicate quality than those they had seen at the kraal on the previous day. This breakfast was offered to the women and men ; but, though all the party were desirous to taste *Inglis* food, they made wry faces on tasting the coffee, and refused to drink it, though they enjoyed the cakes, sweetened with honey.

After breakfast, Mr. Grey addressed the men on the important subjects of death and eternity ; but they did not listen to him with the attention and humility shown by the women. The perseverance of the good man was, however, rewarded by the earnest attention paid to his words by the chief, who was much more intelligent than the other men ; he declared at once that he believed none but a great spirit could have created all things, and he promised Mr. Grey that he would think on the words he had heard, and try, by thinking, to know more of the great God.

The dress, the arms, and the utensils of the English struck the native men with astonishment ; and when Charles pointed out to them a white-crested crane which rose from the shore, and soared over their heads, and then pointing his rifle, brought it down, quivering and dying, the women shrieked, and ran to hide themselves ; and the men, with the exception of the better-informed chief, drew back from the strangers with secret awe.

“ If it would be a turkey or a goose ye shot, Mr.

Charles," said Norah, "wouldn't I stuff and roast it elegant? but sorra a morsel of flesh fit to ate is there on this same long-necked crater, and smelling of fish altogether, it does."

Nevertheless the crane was consigned to the stew-pot, with the more delicate fowls from the kraal; for a crane was pronounced to be human food, which it would be a sin to waste.

While dinner was preparing, a party of the men went over to the kraal for the bullocks, which were killed, and cut up. From a large portion of the flesh, deprived of the bones, and hung to dry in the sun under the inspection of Diego, they prepared a stock of the *carne secca* on which the negroes at Rio are fed. Many of the women sat down near their young friends to learn the art of making hats of plaited grass, and were very successful in their first attempts. In the mean time Mr. Grey continued his serious conversation with the chief, joined by Soosoobe, who seemed deeply interested by it.

"Good father," said the mourning widower, "permit me and my child to remain with these peaceful people, whose habits I love. I wish not to see the great sea, with its moving houses; I wish no longer to fling the assegai or hunt the buffalo. My heart is very quiet. I will build a hut, and a house of prayer, like yours on the mountain; I will dig my fields and my garden, and will watch night and day till God sends his angel to take me to my Oolalie. Every morning and evening I will say the prayers to God with the men and women of the kraal, and will talk to them of Jesus Christ, and his love to all the dark and fair men of the world; and I will beg my brothers to pray to him, that we may all be the children of God."

"Let it be so," said Mr. Grey; "and may the blessing of God sanctify your labours, and bring peace to your own bruised heart, my dear friend Soosoobe, while you earnestly pursue your duty."

It was a great consolation to the Christians to leave the thoughtful and pious Soosoobe with this simple people, though to part with him and his little girl was a sorrow. Mr. Grey gave him some special instructions for his new duties; and impressed on the chief, who gladly accepted the new teacher, the duty of kindness and obedience to him. The dark people ate their dinner with their fair brethren, and then came the separation. Soosoobe was supplied from the slender stores with a spade and axe, and Nina with needles and scissors; and with the little books in which she had herself been taught to read English, and from which she promised to teach other children; Margaret and Julia wept bitterly to lose their pupil, but Miss Keenmark declared that God's hand was in it, and he would bless the sacrifice. Then the dark men departed with their new teachers followed by the prayers of the Europeans. The canoe was finished, and the paddles made, and it was proposed that some of the party should walk, to lighten it, if necessary.

They waited for the break of day; then launched and loaded the canoe, and having proved its security, all embarked, abandoning, with some regret, the old raft. By paddling carefully they kept the canoe balanced; but it was clear that, laden as it was till the water was within a few inches of the edge, any obstacle would be dangerous; and after making several miles in great anxiety, Captain Stockport became so uneasy, that Charles and Albert, observing the shores to be

less encumbered with jungle than usual, landed, with Mataban and Diego, who were always timid, and rarely useful on the water; and thus they considerably lightened the boat. The course of the river was now direct south, and it was vexatious that in its windings so much time was lost.

"I cannot see, Albert," said Charles, "why we should not directly cut across to the coast, which cannot be more than fifty or sixty miles distant, as the bird flies. And surely after we have won our way across the barren karroos, we can have no difficulty in traversing these fine green woodlands, which must abound in game and water,—the two necessities of African life."

"And for that very reason, Charley," answered his friend, "they will doubtless abound with the dark possessors of the soil, who may probably resent our poaching on their manor. It is certainly as fine a sporting country as a hunter would wish to enter; observe, for instance, my dear fellow, yon herd of stately giraffes; I see you are wild to be after them; but we must remember the injunctions of our Captain Absolute."

"But, Albert, this is too absurd," said Charles. "We that came out to Africa to seek sport, not to be allowed to crack a rifle. And, as I am a man and a hunter, here is the spoor of the noble elephant! Have you any pewters about you, for I must have a trial. . . . Now, Mataban, what's the matter, man, that your eyes are rolling about in that melo-dramatic manner?"

Mataban was making significant gestures to direct the attention of the two friends to the opposite hills; over which they now plainly saw a smoke rising, to

their great annoyance, for they could hardly expect to meet another tribe so friendly as the last; besides, being now well victualled, there was no need for delay. Of course, elephant-hunting was deferred, and the party pushed forward speedily and quietly, hoping to escape the notice of their doubtful neighbours.

"What are we to do if we see the fellows coming down on us, Mr. Mentor?" asked Charles. "Are we to face about and meet them with green branches in our hands? Or are we to take to our heels, overtake the canoe, leap in, and row off for our very lives?"

"That would certainly be a risk with such a heavy-laden boat," said Albert; "but I think it would be the wisest expedient, especially if the people were numerous and armed; we will not run away from women, or even from a handful of men. But why is Captain Stockport signalling to us? Is there danger on the river too?"

As they hastened on they heard a distant murmur, which gradually increased to a deep roar before they reached the boat, and found the men mooring it for the party to land. "Not here," cried out Albert; "believe me, captain, this is an objectionable landing-place."

"I know all that, Mr. Beaumont," replied the captain; "but be kind enough to listen to that rumbling, roaring sound. That, Mr. Marshall tells me, is caused by a rapid or fall,—one of the charming peculiarities of river voyaging. You perceive that the river is already rushing, instead of running; and I suppose if we persevere for five minutes longer, we shall be wrecked on a water-fall! A glorious termination to the life of an old seaman! I confess to utter ignorance of these waters; my home has ever

been the broad, level ocean ; I put the command into the hands of the experienced Mr. Marshall."

"Why, captain," said Marshall, "you see it's no use losing one's patience at God's works. Rivers are not seas, sir, and we must let them have their own queer ways. I've had some unregular voyages up and down rivers, big and little, in America, which place, I reckon, is more than half water ; and I tell you, sir, there's nothing for us but a portage."

"Portage, sir !" answered he, peevishly. "Mr. Marshall, you're not to blame. I ask you pardon for losing my temper ; but who but Yankees could tolerate such mongrel voyaging. Gentlemen, if I am forced to travel by land, I do it. . . . I have done it,—not willingly, I must say ; but when I embark on the water, I expect my vessel to carry me, and not that I'm to carry it. The thing's absurd, gentlemen."

"It is so, my good friend," answered Dr. Cameron ; "but we often do absurd things, and they turn out better than we expected. So step out, ladies, tuck up your petticoats, and 'go a-head,' while we each take a share of the cargo, leaving the strongest to shoulder the canoe, till we get to smooth water again."

The arrangement was soon made ; Captain Stockport, ashamed of his irritation, cooled down, and Albert, having made known the fact of his having seen smoke, no time was lost, and they made a rapid progress along the banks of the river, avoiding, for obvious reasons, the open plain.

As they went on, the roaring of the fall grew louder, and a walk of half an hour, happily without any alarm, brought them in sight of the picturesque and tumultuous cataract, where the river, rushing over rugged rocks, which divided it into several streams,

was hurled into a spacious basin below. Here the water danced and glittered in the sunbeams, as if proud of the majestic leap it had made.

They stood some moments looking down from the banks on this scene, then, crossing a wood which ran up from the river, they found themselves at the edge of a steep grassy descent, at the foot of which lay a most lovely little valley, dotted with trees, and, to their consternation, peopled with a numerous tribe of armed warriors, who were stretched on mats beneath the shade of the trees, with baskets of meat before them, on which they were feasting.

If it had been possible to retreat unobserved, a loud scream from Mr. Pinchard rendered the attempt hopeless. In a moment the troop, consisting of about a hundred men, sprung to their feet, seized their spears and shields, and prepared for action.

"What are we to do, Albert?" said Charles, hastily. "We have a good position; but then!"—looking at the women who had retreated to the rear, where the bearers of the canoe also lingered, uncertain of the event.

"We must adopt a pacific policy, certainly," answered Albert. "We cannot launch the canoe from these heights; and before we could descend with it to the banks of the river, they would intercept us. Our numbers are too unequal for a contest, therefore Marshall and I will advance with the flag of truce; and you must be ready to avenge us, if they should violate the laws of honourable war."

"You are a true hero, Albert!" said Margaret. "How much we all love you."

Albert laughed as he plucked green branches for his flag of truce; then, each having a pair of pistols con-

cealed under his vest, Marshall and he walked slowly forward towards the chief, who was easily distinguished by a large tuft of white ostrich feathers on his head, and by a handsome kaross of leopard skin worn very gracefully. The warriors remained immovable till the ambassadors arrived, when Albert held out the hand of amity, which the chief readily took, and remained silent to hear the message.

"I see you are a great chief," said Albert. "I come to you to say that we are unfortunate travellers who have been robbed by wandering tribes, and are without the means to offer you the presents which are due to you. These are all the treasures we have left,"—presenting him with the last packet of beads; "but we trust you will aid us to reach our friends, who are waiting with a large ship for us at the coast. If you will give us a guide, we will reward him, and send rich presents to you from our ship."

"Let your people come to me," said the chief, evading the request of Albert. "I wish to see many white men."

"We will encamp near you," answered Albert; "but our women cover their faces before strange men." He then dispatched Marshall to make the report, and summon the party; for a meeting was now inevitable.

The travellers arranged themselves with due order and dignity in a long procession, headed by Captain Stockport; the women wore their hats pulled over their faces, and were guarded by their armed attendants; and the canoe, carried by its four bearers, brought up the rear. Extreme astonishment kept the savage men silent for some time; then many voices broke out in exclamations of wonder, not unmingled with exultation at the prospect of such a prize.

"You are many," said the chief; "but my warriors cover the plains like the springboks. Do your women fight?"

"We have amongst us great warriors," answered Albert, "who can well defend our women in need. Our arms are terrible; we carry death in our hands."

"See," said the chief, displaying the sheaf of assegais within his shield. "Have your warriors assegais? These are death."

Albert made a signal to Charles, pointing to a herd of sassabys grazing near the rivers, about a hundred yards from them. Charles raised his rifle, and with a single shot brought down the largest animal; the chief was silent, but his warriors uttered a cry of terror when they saw the sassaby fall.

"This is our weapon of war," said Albert; "and it never fails."

"I have seen the white men send fire from their guns," said the chief, "when I drove my slaves down to sell at the factory; but I have seen no warriors so brave as yours. You shall stay with me, and help me to defeat a tribe from the north, who are rich in cattle, which we will share with you, and give you many slaves."

"We do not want cattle," answered Albert. "We can kill the wild animals for food; and we may not stay to fight with your warriors, for a ship waits for us at the port."

The eyes of the chief sparkled with anger, but he said mildly, "You and your women shall stay one day to eat with us; we will dance for you, and give you the ivory the white men love. Come to my kraal."

It was useless to resist the chief's command, and the party reluctantly consented to visit him. Captain

Stockport requested to remain with his boat and the bearers on the banks of the river ; but the haughty chief was peremptory ; his warriors surrounded the strangers, and, unwilling to leave their valuable bark unprotected, they were compelled to carry it onward. Following the chief to some distance up the valley, and then passing through a gorge in the high hills behind, they came upon such a pretty scene as Sherwood Forest might have been in the days of Robin Hood. A number of tall forest-trees spread their shade over the green turf, and a large circle of huts, formed of interwoven branches thatched with grass, stood in the midst.

Before the huts were many women and children, some resting under the trees, others making arrows ; but all fled in dismay at the sight of the strangers. It was some time before they ventured to peep cautiously out of their huts. One after another, however, crept outside the entrance to gaze on the strange creatures approaching ; and when the canoe appeared, they screamed with terror, taking it for a monstrous animal with eight legs,—a blunder which caused the chief to laugh in a most boisterous manner. He then called to his side a tall young woman, decorated with beads, and with brass rings round her arms and ancles. She was dressed in a short tunic of gay-coloured print, with a scarf of the same material, not ungracefully disposed over one shoulder and knotted below the other. On her head, which was shaved, except some stiff curls at the crown, she wore several pretty feathers. Her skin was brown and shining, and her eyes quick and intelligent.

“ My women are not afraid to uncover their faces ; they are very beautiful,” said Chinguava, the chief.

"They do not take out their eyes," added he, looking with astonishment and disgust at Miss Keenmark, who just then had taken off her spectacles to wipe away a tear, shed rather for her beloved pupils than for herself.

Mafoonie, the young wife, appeared good-natured, and Margaret and Julia, without scruple, went up and took her hand. At first she shrank from the salutation; then, lifting the broad brim of their hats, she looked in their faces with smiling curiosity.

"We are all sisters, Mafoonie, though you are dark and we are fair," said Margaret.

The sultana laughed softly at hearing her own language spoken imperfectly, and answered so rapidly that they could scarcely comprehend her, but thought she inquired how their skin became so frightful. While this attempt at acquaintance went on, Marshall and Albert endeavoured to obtain some reply to their request for a guide from the chief; and Marshall requested, that at least he would afford them some information respecting the navigation of the river lower down.

He laughed scornfully, and said, "The warriors of Chinguava do not walk on the waters, but on the firm plains. This trunk of a tree, which your slaves carry, will be swallowed by the Imfooboo, and the crocodile will devour you. Stay with me, and build huts; I will take you for my secretary," addressing Albert; "he," pointing to Charles, "shall be a chief among my warriors; and that white flower," added he, looking with astonishment at Maude, whose hat had been removed by the inquisitive Mafoonie, revealing her lovely face, surrounded by rich fair curls,—“that white flower I will take for my wife.”

Maude observed that the chief pointed to her as he spoke, and not understanding his words, she believed he was proposing to eat her ; she turned very pale and trembled, till Margaret and Julia told her, laughing, of the honour intended to be conferred on her ; but Miss Keenmark, with great indignation, said, " Chief, the women of our country marry only Englishmen and Christians."

" I take my wives from any tribe I choose, old woman of many eyes ; and I shall take the white girl," said Chinguava.

" Such a marriage cannot take place, chief," said Albert, firmly. " If you cannot assist us, we must depart, and it would be well for you not to interrupt our progress."

The chief was silent some time ; but the cunning expression of his eyes alarmed Albert. " You shall stay to-night," said he ; " I will give you two huts ; to-morrow you shall go. Now eat and drink with me." He then commanded the women to bring food, and they soon produced baskets of boiled beef, sweet potatoes roasted in the ashes, the large nuts of the nivana-tree, and calabashes of a fermented liquor, which the chief and his warriors greedily drank, but the visitors declined.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Disappearance of the Canoe. The Treachery of Chinguava.
An Elephant-hunt. The Discovery of the Canoe. A Moon-
light Flitting.

It was vexatious to the anxious travellers to be delayed; but it was obviously dangerous to come to open war with the chief; they therefore agreed to remain till morning, but politely refused the dirty dark huts offered to them, and selecting a spot as far distant from the kraal as they could venture to do without offending their host, they pitched the tent for the women as usual. The sight of this novelty astonished the chief, and he earnestly coveted the possession of it.

"Give me the hut of your women," said he, "that I may take it with me when I go to war; then my enemies will say, 'What a great king Chinguava is!'"

This request was evaded for the present, and the travellers hoped to escape his rapacity by leaving the spot, if possible, without ceremony, at break of day. There was much dancing and singing among the natives for the entertainment of their guests, and the tent continued to be thronged by the curious native women till nightfall; the Europeans then closed round it, and lay down on their cloaks, under the canopy of heaven, keeping up, however, a silent and strict watch.

The native men did not all retire into the kraal, but several groups lay under the trees, near enough to be a perplexing obstacle to the intended fugitives. The night was hot, cloudy, and dark; and Albert,

during his watch, was several times alarmed by a rustling in the bushes near the tent ; but as they were all armed and ready for defence, he believed all was safe. Very anxiously the party watched for the first gleam of light, which the cloudy state of the atmosphere retarded. But at length a faint gleam of day induced them to rise and look out ; and they were thankful to observe that none of the natives were in sight.

It had been arranged that Mataban, Diego, Dick, and John, should be the bearers of the canoe, which had been placed for security in a thicket behind the tent. They were now ordered to remove it as quietly as possible to the river, while the remainder of the party made ready to follow them. All were busy, when a muttered exclamation from the bushes drew the attention of Charles and Albert, who followed the men sent for the canoe, and, to their dismay, saw that it was gone.

The treachery of Chinguava was revealed ; he had caused the boat to be removed in the night, to prevent their departure, and they now saw themselves at his mercy. The first plan of the distressed party was to proceed at once along the banks of the river on foot ; but a moment's reflection showed how useless this would be, for the swift-footed warriors of the barbarous chief would soon overtake them in their slow progress. The case seemed desperate, and the females of the party wept bitterly, for they knew that it was their helplessness that impeded the escape of the strong.

"Dry your tears, my children," said Mrs. Churchill ; "God has protected us in greater dangers than this. And do you, my brave friends, continue still to be bold in your deeds, lofty in your words, and firm in your faith, and we shall yet vanquish the heathen."

"I will speak to him in the words of truth and love," said Mr. Grey, "and it may please God that he will listen to me."

"Your hour is not yet come, Mr. Grey," replied the lady. "Our brave protectors must quell him by their determined spirit; and a time may arrive when he will be disposed to hear of that faith which emboldens the Christian in the midst of foes."

"He will sell us all for slaves!" cried Mr. Pinchard.

"He hasn't taken us yet," said Charles. "We must fortify our little castle, and endeavour to make a treaty with the villain. Into your tent, ladies, while we cut down piles of '*Wait-a-bit*' thorns to build up for ramparts. Then we will dig trenches outside our walls, and fire on the enemy, if they dare approach us."

"Musha! Master Charles!" cried Norah, "but it's the grand soldier ye'd make. But isn't it the mate and the wather we'd be wantin' in our castle, and that thafe of the world not the man to give us that same."

"Norah is not far wrong, Charles," said Albert, laughing; "we are in a bad condition for a siege, and we will not begin to fortify till we have endeavoured to make conditions."

"I kenned, by the first look," said Dick, "that he would turn out a rogue, as he is; but see if I'se not over sharp for him. I'se not the chap to let them black niggers have my axes and nails; and I'se just dig a hole and bury them, and lie down atop on't."

At the first appearance of life in the kraal, a deputation, consisting of Albert, Charles, Marshall, and Dr. Cameron, walked forward, with all the dignity they could assume, to pay the chief a morning visit. They found him at the entrance of his hut, fixing a bundle of newly-formed assegais within his shield, and

he appeared to notice the approach of the strangers with great indifference. Albert informed him that they had discovered their canoe was missing, and he begged to know what had become of it.

"Some of my warriors have taken it," said the chief, carelessly. "It is well ; now you will stay with me."

"It is not well," replied Albert. "We wish to depart immediately, and therefore, Chinguava, you must command your warriors to restore our boat."

"Remain with me this day," said Chinguava, in a bland tone. "I will send my warriors to slay the robbers, and bring your canoe back. I will give your women a cow,—for you must stay now ; see the black clouds over us ; the water will come down to-day, and many days, and would fill your canoe till it sunk down among the crocodiles and imfooboos."

This was too true ; the sultry air and heavy clouds foretold a tropical storm, in which it would be madness to attempt the river-voyage. This was doubly vexatious, because the party desired, above all things, to keep at a distance from the treacherous natives, and yet had no protection from the coming storm.

Dr. Cameron spoke his opinion in English ; then Albert said to the chief : "Chinguava, we will rely on your faith. We will stay on your grounds, if you will permit us to build huts on the spot where our tent stands."

The chief, much elated at his conquest, not only granted permission, but ordered his men to assist, that the huts might be erected before the storm came on. Dick was reluctant to produce his tools ; but the natives possessed axes, probably obtained in exchange for slaves at Inhambane or Delagoa. There was no

difficulty in obtaining materials, for the woods around abounded in tall timber-trees. A great number of poles, about twelve feet long, with forked ends, were cut ; these were fixed in the ground in a large circle, at a little distance from each other ; the forked ends were then brought together at the top, and firmly tied with the fibrous bark of a neighbouring tree. Then the sides were interwoven with slender willows, and the roof thatched with long dry grass, of which the girls collected a stack for beds.

Three of these shells were happily finished before the deafening thunder and flashing lightning ushered in the storm. The tent was struck, and the women took possession of one of the huts ; a smaller one, in which the fragments of wood were piled up for fuel, was to be the kitchen, eating-room, and council-chamber ; and the third and largest was for the men and their valuable arms and ammunition.

The chief did not forget his promise ; he not only sent them a cow, but also a large basket of cooked beef, boiled till it was perfectly tender, and which, though they certainly had a prejudice in favour of European cookery, they were too hungry to reject. Norah milked "their own cow," and the milk was much enjoyed.

It was, however, a serious charge to provide food for more than twenty healthy persons, and the thoughtful part of the community prayed that the storm might not outlast the chief's fit of generosity. At present the prospect was alarming,—the thunder was succeeded by torrents of heavy rain, which continued with unabated violence the whole night,—and every one was thankful for the shelter so promptly procured. The morning dawned, however, fair and

pleasant,—a delicious fragrance from the flowers and herbage filled the air,—and the woods resounded with the cheerful, though somewhat unmusical, notes of the various inhabitants,—birds, monkeys, and larger animals.

While their neighbours yet slept, Charles and Albert, attended by John and Mataban, proceeded through the woods to a plain at some distance, where they shot a large buffalo, which they skinned and cut up on the spot ; and leaving the head and entrails for the vultures and jackals, they carried off the skin and flesh to their huts, before the natives issued from the kraal.

New milk from the cow, and cakes from the corn of the friendly tribe they had last visited, made a sumptuous breakfast ; then Mr. Grey assembled his little congregation to prayers, and the chief at that moment entering, Albert commanded him to be silent while they worshipped their God. Chinguava obeyed, but gazed with astonishment at the humble posture, and solemn raising of hands and eyes ; and frequently looked up, with an appearance of terror, as if he expected to behold some supernatural visitor.

When they had concluded their devotions, they rose and welcomed their visitor, and in answer to his numerous inquiries, Mr. Grey tried to enlighten him on the subject of the one great Creator and Ruler of the world. But after his curiosity was in some measure satisfied, he hastily changed the subject, and began to speak of invading the peaceful tribes who dwelt up the river, for he wanted cattle and slaves to exchange for dungaree and brass bangles to dress his wives, and for knives and iron pots, all of which could be supplied by the factor at the slave-mart.

The chief waited for the reply of his intended allies; but perceiving their unwillingness, his eyes glistened with anger, and he said, "All the white men have the hearts of women. The dark men love war; the white men love ivory, but they dare not kill the *maclou* themselves; they buy the teeth from the brave dark warrior."

Albert gladly seized on this hint to evade the question of joining the invading party, and said, "Will Chinguava and his hunters go to kill the elephant, and he shall see how the brave white men hunt and obtain ivory."

This proposal seemed to please the chief, though he deferred the expedition. He said the rains would come again, which was indeed the case, for heavy showers continued during the next two days. The chief was a troublesome visitor to the huts, being desirous to extort presents, and the females of the party confined themselves to their own apartment, to escape his rude remarks. They were compelled to have fires in all the huts, that the smoke might drive away the mosquitoes, which abounded in this close, woody, moist valley, and they took the opportunity to smoke and dry buffalo-flesh for their future provision.

The third morning was so clear and calm that all the men of the kraal turned out, armed with spears and assegais, to proceed to the elephant-grounds, four or five miles to the north-west. Albert, Charles, and John, well armed, agreed to accompany them, and the kraal was left to the women and unarmed white men.

No sooner were the hunters out of sight, than Dick said, "Captain Stockport! sir! I've fund her! Rain

or fair, I've sought high and low these three days, for miles round about ; and last night what did I see, but a mast of my own cutting, standing right up ower a thicket of them riving thorns. Thinks I, if ye're there, ye're not by yersel', an' I out wi' my axe, and cut right through 'em till I fund my bonny boat right int' thick on 'em. I covered her cannily up, and marked where she was, and now, captain, wi' your leave, it'll not be long afore she's afloat ; and then, sir, what's to hinder us makin' a moonlight flittin' ?"

Dick's important news was discussed ; the temptation was strong, the opportunity was favourable, and all the female votes were for the measure. Captain Stockport was himself again when he said, "It is decided." Mr. Grey, with Margaret and Miss Keenmark, had been earnestly engaged in endeavouring to make some religious impression on the minds of the benighted African women, and they had some hope of success with the young Mafoonie ; they now went over to the kraal, carrying some needles as presents, and by talking to the women, proposed to keep them from the huts. Diego, Dick, Marshall, and Pierre, then went down the banks of the river to the spot where the canoe was concealed, fortunately in a directly opposite direction to that which the hunters had taken. They extricated the valuable prize from the bushes, found it uninjured, conveyed it to the river, and moored it under a beetling crag, where it lay hidden by tall reeds and spreading mangroves.

After this they secretly conveyed to the canoe the tools, cooking-utensils, tent and poles, bags, and heavy baskets of dried meat, and having stowed 'them, they returned to wait anxiously till the shades of evening enabled the whole party to steal unnoticed to the river.

In the mean time the sportsmen followed the experienced Africans to a well-known watering-place a few miles up the river, from whence they tracked the spoor of the elephants, distinctly marked in the soil moist with the rains of the preceding days. Through woods, where the scattered boughs marked the passage of the huge creatures, and over plains they followed the broad footsteps, two feet in diameter, till reaching the ridge of a low hill, they looked down on a forest scene where twenty female elephants at least some followed by young ones, were feeding on the leaves of trees, or turning up the ground with their tusks, to seek for the bulbs which form a portion of their enormous rations.

"How glorious!" cried Charles. "It is worth the short captivity we have endured to have a real elephant-hunt."

"Why, for the matter of that, Mr. Staunton," said John, "it's about t' first time I iver heard of hunters crambling after animals on foot. Give me a good horse under me, and a pack of hounds afore me, and that's what I call hunting, sir. Now what sport can there be in running after them great clumsy beasts, that cannot, for their lives, get out of our way."

"We shall see, John," replied Albert. "An elephant is no bad hand at a run; and then it will be we that, for our lives, must get out of her way."

By this time the natives had stealthily surrounded the herd, while the animals, inoffensive in their own habits, dreaded no foes, but continued quietly to gorge immense quantities of herbage. The chief gave a signal, and showers of assegais were directed against the victims, most of the weapons fell short of their aim; but about a dozen remained fixed in the stout

hides of the elephants, which, starting forward irritated by the smart of their wounds, rushed with a loud trumpet-like cry towards a thicket of *wagt-ein-beetj* thorns which bounded one side of the plain, overthrowing several of the natives in their way ; while one animal, desperate with pain, grasped a man with its trunk, and flung him to a great distance.

By this time Charles and Albert, followed by the chief, had hastened to the point of retreat, and each selecting a large elephant, they fired both barrels of their rifles behind the shoulder. Albert's elephant fell, with a loud cry ; but the other, though wounded, threw up its trunk, and charged with great fury at the aggressors ; the danger was imminent, but John, who had reserved his fire, sprung forward boldly, and sent a shot into the side of the beast which brought it to the ground, when it was speedily despatched with spears.

The chief could not restrain his feelings of admiration ; he declared his friends should never leave him ; they should be his generals ; finally, he offered to present them with half the ivory.

"Keep the ivory, Chinguava," said Albert, "and give us back the canoe ; our women wish to depart."

"That cannot be," said the crafty African, "for my people have burnt the useless boat."

Charles was in a state of great indignation at this assertion, but Albert saw a lurking expression of deceit in the eyes of the chief which made him doubt the truth of it, especially as he knew him to be too grasping to destroy anything he could turn to his advantage.

The Africans, with great loss of skin, had penetrated into the thickets, but they failed to dislodge the rest of the elephants, and Chinguava reviled them

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for their cowardice and ill-success, though several of the poor wretches were much injured by the heavy feet of their antagonists, and the man who had been thrown by the elephant was found with his neck dislocated, quite dead. This accident the chief treated as a jest, and laughed when Albert proposed to bury the body, that it might not become the prey of ravenous beasts ; but John, with a hunting-knife, scratched up the light soil to make a grave for the victim, while the Africans were employed in skinning and cutting up the mighty game, and in carefully extracting from the bone-sockets the large and valuable tusks.

The outer skin, which was immensely thick, was first removed, and great care was taken not to injure the soft, firm inner skin, which is used for water-bottles, being strong and flexible. After skinning the animal, each man cut away as much of the flesh as he could carry ; the trunk, which is considered exceedingly delicate food, was reserved for the chief. Then leaving the remains of the huge carcasses for the vultures and hyenas, they turned their steps homeward, where they did not arrive till it was nearly dark.

Great were the rejoicings in the kraal when the mountains of flesh were brought in ; fires blazed, and cookery was immediately commenced. The Europeans, pleading fatigue, declined joining in the feast, but promised to breakfast with the chief next morning, and go off on another chase into the elephant-country. Then, glad to escape, they entered their own hut, and were surprised to meet Dr. Cameron and Captain Stockport in much agitation, who immediately asked if the chief intended to visit them that evening.

"I should think he has had walking enough for one day," said Charles, "and must, moreover, be as voraciously hungry as we are; and we must trouble Norah to supply us with supper immediately."

Pierre and Diego appeared with a dish of cold meat, which was received with much dissatisfaction by the hungry hunters; and John said, "I niver had much liking for strange flesh, but I must cut a steak from this queer lump of elephant-meat I fetched for a curo'sity, for I can't stand that slice of cold *biltongue*, as Mataban calls it. So, come, *Peer*, we'll start cooking."

"Mais! Monsieur Jean! il n'est pas possible! (it must to speak, Monsieur le Capitaine), dare is not de batterie de cuisine," exclaimed Pierre, in great embarrassment.

"What! have they carried off our pans and kettles?" asked Charles.

"Our secret must come out, Charles," said Dr. Cameron. "We have carried them off ourselves; and you must be content with your indifferent fare. All our property is conveyed to the recovered canoe; and we only wait for silence in the kraal, and darkness in the heavens, to convey ourselves off also."

"Thank God!" cried Charles; "for that hypocritical rascal would never willingly have emancipated us; and to come to fighting was impossible, with our weak women at our heels. But where are they now, doctor?"

"Down at the canoe, waiting for us in fear and trembling," said the doctor. "Even Mr. Grey has been got down unperceived, and all we have left to do is to follow them with the guns, my medicine-chest, and a few light packages, when we can calculate that

our neighbours are at rest ; the sooner the better, for in two hours the moon will rise."

The feast and noise of tongues continued for another hour, after which silence gradually stole over the kraal, and they had every reason to conclude that fatigue and gluttony had plunged their captors into a profound sleep. Then, one after another, with cautious steps, the party stole away, Diego, who knew the rendezvous, being leader. When they had passed through the opening in the hills, and left the kraal behind them, they breathed more freely, and hastened onward, knowing well what must be the anxiety of their waiting friends. They reached the fringe of rushes on the banks of the river, passed through by a path formed by the wild animals which went to drink, then walking along the muddy shores for about two hundred yards, they came in sight of the silent, watchful party.

"We are all here, safe and ready," cried Dr. Cameron.

"Unmoor the boat, and embark," said Captain Stockport, once more a commander.

There was no time for words ; the company took their seats in the crowded boat, the oars, which had been used for the litter, were ready, and they began to row slowly down the river, now deep and rapid from the late rains. A painful silence reigned for some time, but the moon rising brightly, cheered them a little, for they could now more clearly see their perilous way.

"I fear, gentlemen," said Captain Stockport, when they had rowed five or six miles down the river, "that we shall be compelled to lighten the boat, or she will be swamped. Dr. Cameron and I, with Diego and

Mataban, who have had little fatigue to-day, will land first, and walk along the shore, where we can keep an eye on you."

"And drive off any hippopotamus who may take a fancy to the boat," said Dr. Cameron, taking a gun.

"And now that we have room to move, do tell us your adventures, Charles," said Julia.

The adventures were neither interesting nor agreeable, and all were disgusted with the treachery and cruelty of Chinguava, and rejoiced at their escape from him; though Mr. Pinchard was persuaded they should be overtaken and murdered.

"If we were once beyond the high mountains we see at the east," said Albert, "I do not think Chinguava would follow us, for I drew from him a confession of his dread of a powerful hostile tribe in the country that lies near the coast."

"And may not we equally fear this powerful people?" asked Mrs. Churchill.

"I do not think so," replied Albert. "They are in constant communication with the Portuguese settlements; and, though they are wild and ignorant, they are less barbarous than the tribes of the interior; besides, we may perhaps avoid their kraals. But now we must give all our attention to the navigation of the river, in order to steer clear of these rocky fragments, and I shall be glad to hail the morning light."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Diego's Track recovered. The Hippopotami and Crocodile. The Herd of Elephants. The Mountain-pass and its Dangers. The Cave, and Letters from Home. The Pursuers pursued. The Conflict.

As soon as the morning faintly dawned, the party earnestly desired to land, to relieve their limbs from the cramped position, and to take some food. The banks had again become flat, and the river broad, and so shallow, that the slender canoe occasionally grated dangerously against the stony bed. Suddenly Diego, uttering an exclamation, sprang upon the land, looked eagerly round, and said, "This is the spot where our caravan first came upon the river. I know yon spreading fig-tree ; and there is still the circle of thorns we made round it to enclose our horses when we encamped for the night. Now I can guide you across the mountains to Inhambane."

Captain Stockport looked dissatisfied, but Diego assured him the river, lower down, was rocky and impassable for boats ; besides, Marshall had ever been of opinion that it flowed into one of the large rivers that run to Delagoa, and the captain reluctantly yielded to their opinion. Just then, too, a great noise of roaring and snorting down below made all the party land hastily ; and immediately after a numerous herd of hippopotami, splashing through the water with evident enjoyment, dashed past the canoe, and made their way up the river, leaving the whole party inclined to adopt Diego's plan. It was certainly

desirable to proceed direct to Inhambane, which they could now do by crossing the mountains, and by this means, too, they might avoid Chinguava, who would certainly, if he pursued them, follow the course of the river.

"And what is to become of the canoe?" asked Mrs. Churchill.

"We will send it down the stream with a message to our friends," said Edmund, who had been carefully cutting on one of the smooth benches the words, "We go across the mountains to Inhambane;" and had rubbed into his carving the black mixture they used for ink, to render it more conspicuous. Everything was then again removed from the canoe, which was suffered to drift down the stream.

While a fire was lighted under the fig-tree, and a stew of dried buffalo-meat prepared for breakfast, Dick made a new substantial litter of the skin of the buffalo nailed to a pair of oars. Captain Stockport and Marshall were bringing the last packages from the landing-place, when they were startled by the sight of a huge crocodile lying on the shore, with a body as thick as that of a buffalo, and of prodigious length. When it raised its frightful head, and opened its monstrous mouth, the two valiant men at once took to flight, very glad to hear, from the splash in the water, that the creature had also fled from them.

Laughing at his own cowardice, Captain Stockport allowed that all his nautical experience availed him nothing in these monster-haunted rivers, and that even land-voyaging might be better than this.

Mr. Grey would not permit his little congregation to commence their new journey till they had joined with him in praying for God's blessing on it. Then

with hopeful and trusting hearts they set out cheerfully in the cool morning over the green turf, where lofty trees were scattered so thickly that they promised shade, even from the noon-day sun. The girls enjoyed the perfume of the flowers, the chattering of the birds, and the lovely forms of animal life that were seen through the trees, herds of graceful antelopes and superb giraffes, mingled with the curious quagga, and the wild-looking hartebeeste, which Mataban named the *Caama*.

At length, on crossing a low hill, and looking beyond, Julia uttered an exclamation of delight, saying, "How beautiful! How wonderful! Edmund, Miss Keenmark, do look below! How glad I am that the cruel Chinguava is not here to kill them."

Upon the wide plain before them was scattered a herd of at least fifty noble elephants,—some feeding on the branches of the trees, and others drinking from a pool, or pouring streams of water from their trunks over their bodies. Though many of them were not more than a hundred yards from the hill, they seemed to take no notice of the strangers, though Mr. Pinchard uttered a loud shriek, as he drew back in dismay. The young people laughed at his cowardice, Miss Keenmark looked on him with contempt, and Mrs. Churchill said to him, "Be under no apprehension, Mr. Pinchard, the elephant does not prey on man."

"But Mr. Beaumont has seen men trampled on and destroyed by the monsters," cried Mr. Pinchard.

"The men were aggressors," said Albert.

"It is a peculiar characteristic of the herbivorous animals," observed Miss Keenmark, "that their nature is gentle and inoffensive. I cannot call the elephant a monster, Mr. Pinchard. I admire its ash-coloured

skin, assimilating in colour with the grey thorny bushes amidst which it loves to hide, and where, but for its towering height, it might remain unnoticed even by the keen sportsman. Our intrusion may put the extraordinary animals to flight, and I shall grieve to alarm them; but I have no doubt we shall be allowed to pass with impunity, if we respect their manorial rights."

"Which we certainly must do," said Captain Stockport; "and, for my part, I think it a dishonourable expenditure of powder and ball to pour a broadside on a neutral."

However it required much persuasion to induce Mr. Pinchard to move, and nothing but the dread of being left with the "monsters" gave him courage to follow his companions, who walked quietly across the plain, scarcely noticed by the well-fed herd, which had evidently had no experience of the destructive propensities of man.

The dark range of mountains were now so plainly seen, that the travellers hoped to reach them before evening, and, after a short noon-day rest, they toiled on, in hopes of placing this formidable barrier between them and their foes. As they drew near the thick woods which shrouded the base of the mountains, they looked up with alarm at the majestic rocky crests, which seemed to pierce the clouds and bar all progress; but Diego assured them he knew the pass, and that the only danger and difficulty would be in traversing the wood. Fortunately they discovered a path made by the elephants, which had broken down the thorny bushes that formed the under-growth of the forest. Every tree which overhung their route was adorned with innumerable epiphytes, of eccentric form, lovely colours, and delicate odour.

For half a mile they wound silently and fearfully through the dense thicket, the tall timber-trees shutting out the declining light of day, and the distant roar of the lion, the harsh howl of the hyæna, and the fierce, sharp bark of the wild dog, startling them from time to time ; while more than once the angry hiss of some unseen serpent made them spring forward to avoid the dangerous enemy ; and many a time Mr. Grey lamented the trouble his infirmities had brought on them, as the litter was slowly dragged through the bushes.

At length the forest became less intricate ; they were mounting upward ; and soon the rocky path was but scantily clothed with low bushes, and became more steep. They now walked along a ledge which wound up towards a gorge which formed the pass ; but darkness was falling fast ; all were exhausted, and it was plain the pass could not be made before morning.

But here Diego pointed out to them a little higher up the mouth of a cave, which had afforded shelter, on his previous journey, to the caravan of merchants in a sudden thunder-storm. The girls first reached the cavern, and entered at once, but ran out in alarm. "The cave is filled with lights !" cried Julia to the young men, who had now come up.

Charles put his head in, and, looking at his rifle, said : "I believe, Julia, it will turn out to be nothing worse than Robinson Crusoe's old goat. We must dislodge him."

Albert called on his friend not to be rash, and to the toiling party to pass onward quickly, while Charles and he guarded their retreat ; for a deep growl had assured him the tenant was no goat. All pushed forward in haste past the point of danger, and the

moment after a large lioness put out her head, roaring tremendously, showing her sharp teeth, and lashing her tail. She looked at the bold young men, who faced her with their guns raised, as if she intended to spring upon them, and they were not without a little flutter at the heart. After some consideration she turned round, as if to summon aid ; then, giving a tremendous farewell roar, she retreated majestically down to the forest, followed by two good-sized cubs, which trotted on, unconscious of danger.

"Just one shot, Albert," said Charles, as the lioness coolly walked off.

"Not by any means," answered Albert ; "we do not want lion's flesh ; and, remember, we are fugitives, and our pursuers may be in hearing."

"Do you think there are any more lions in the cave ?" asked Mr. Pinchard, from an eminence, which he had climbed in his fright.

"At all events," said Dr. Cameron, laughing, "as her majesty may choose to return, we will not take the liberty of intruding into her palace. We must march on a little higher, my good friends."

But before they had ascended twenty yards, Julia cried out, "Stop, stop, everybody ! here is something written on the rock !"

It was barely light enough to read on a flat slab of upright rock these words, written with some black mixture : "Friends from the Mountain Ark, turn to the narrow cleft on the left,—there, opposite the fountain, and behind the mimosa-bush, you will find safe shelter, and *letters from home.*"

These English words were undoubtedly written for them ; and, no longer weary, the happy party, forgetful even of the lions, climbed the rocky path till they

reached a narrow cleft or crack in the solid mountain which lay to the left. This passage was so narrow, that only one could move through it at once, and Albert had the honour of precedence.

Before they had penetrated twenty yards, the cleft became broader, and they reached a stream flowing down the mountain at the right hand into a basin below, opposite to which a mimosa-bush grew against the left wall of the pass.

Here Albert halted,—the mimosa-bush was turned aside, and the rock appeared solid ; but, on further examination, a portion was discovered to be moveable. This, by the united efforts of three strong men, was forced from its place, and disclosed a light, low, and spacious cavern, which was immediately taken possession of. A careful inspection proved that it was not inhabited, yet not empty, for several large baskets stood on a ledge above the floor with Mrs. Churchill's name attached to them.

While the girls danced round the baskets for joy, as they sought for news, the Africans brought buckets of water from the fountain, and brushwood for fuel. John then suggested, "Afore we start on ought else, master, what think ye if we were to shut t'door."

Everybody laughed at John's prudence ; and, while baskets were unpacking, Dick and he, with the help of ropes and various contrivances, drew the barrier of rock to its place, and secured the entrance. Norah made a fire to obtain light, and then the contents of the baskets were inspected. The first was filled with biscuits, the next with tea, coffee, sugar, and rice ; the third contained a quantity of coloured glass beads, needles, and a number of gaudy handkerchiefs, besides a packet of letters,—the first of which, addressed to

Albert, was Elliott's brief explanation of the affair, including also a *chart* of the road to Inhambane :—

“Here *we* are, Beaumont ! direct from Inhambane, where we left Mrs. Grey and her pretty girls safe and happy. A boat-party have ascended from Delagoa, who insist on it they shall reach our old river. We now go to meet them at the river, and work up to the mountain ; but leave this *cache* in case we miss you. The blacks towards the coast are fierce and greedy, but fear the whites, and especially the Portuguese governor, whose *firman* I enclose, with the vice-regal seal, which you must ostentatiously display ; then conciliate your men with the beads and trumpery.”

Colonel Churchill's letter was more explanatory ; unable to leave his responsible situation to undertake the voyage himself, he had yielded to Captain Elliott's request that he might be allowed to command the “exploring party.” He had even with some reluctance granted leave of absence to Hubert to accompany him, solely because he knew something of the country, and might supply the place of his friend Elliott, should any accident occur to him. Mayetta also returned with the expedition, but Abdalla was detained to resume his duties, and, as Colonel Churchill allowed, to entertain him with the wonderful adventures of the wanderers. A commodious vessel was to lie off Delagoa and Inhambane alternately, to wait the result of the expedition, and sailors accustomed to river-navigation had been engaged to assist.

“Dear papa will not know his tall, awkward brown girls,” said Julia, after they had shed tears of joy and thankfulness over their letter.

"Are we then so very brown?" asked Maude anxiously.

"You cannot be made brown, Maude," said Margaret; "but Julia and I have taken no care of our rough faces. No matter, dear papa will be only too thankful if he sees us again in health, and knowing a little more, I think I may say, mamma, than when we left England."

"There is the sole subject of my regret," said Miss Keenmark. "I look back with dismay and remorse at the fearful amount of time lost for ever, that might have been profitably employed in the most ennobling studies. Alas! I shall be ashamed to appear before the worthy Colonel Churchill to give an account of my stewardship."

"Be satisfied, Miss Keenmark," replied Mrs. Churchill. "I now venture to hope, through God's mercy, that there is a fair prospect of my children renewing their studies under you; an advantage I fully appreciate. Nevertheless I shall ever consider the last year as the most usefully-spent portion of their whole life. They have learnt to submit to adversity, to endure labour and fatigue, to face danger, and to see and own the might and majesty of God exhibited in the wonders of creation."

Mr. Grey had been greatly agitated on reading his letters, and had for some time knelt down apart from the rest to pour out his gratitude in prayer; he now said, "I earnestly hope, my dear friends, that from the history of my beloved family you may all learn that a perfect trust in God must produce peace. My dear wife tells me, that though sold with her children into slavery, she never lost her confidence in His mercy, and, blessed be His name, He did not forget

her. A Portuguese merchant, residing at the port, bought her and her girls, and, discovering that she was an educated woman, employed her as governess to his children. Satisfied with her talents, her accomplishments, and manners, he allowed her to retain her children, whom he employed in some light occupation connected with his business, which their ingenuity soon rendered so profitable, that nothing could have induced their master to part with them." Mrs. Grey assured her husband they had ever been kindly treated, and that when the factor had heard her sad story, he had even promised to restore her without ransom to her husband, if he should ever appear to claim her; but of this the afflicted wife had never dared to indulge a hope. The liberality of Colonel Churchill had amply satisfied the merchant, and they were now free, but continued to reside in his house till the happy moment of their meeting should arrive.

"See that now!" cried Norah, who had listened, weeping, to his words. "And isn't it right glad the mistress and the gals will be to mate ye, sir, and niver a word said about yer short leg, which same is by no manes a bad leg, barring a bit crookt, by rason the docther was not convaniant. And now the laves is wet, madam, and will it plase ye to drink the tay wather agin, and ate yer biscuits like Christians."

It was indeed like Christians with humble, thankful hearts, that the happy party enjoyed their unaccustomed refreshment, and offered up their evening prayers. Then with the tent, and such contrivances as their means allowed, they fitted up temporary dormitories, and took their rest in security.

The morning sun, shining through an opening in the roof of the cave, roused the party; but the young

people petitioned to have a breakfast of coffee before they departed, which delayed them longer than Captain Stockport approved. Norah wished to have the barrier removed, that she might obtain fresh water ; but Marshall prudently suggested that an observation should be taken from the opening above, before they risked the removal of the rock. A large stone rolled to the spot was sufficient to form a kind of step, and Edmund, who first looked out, perceiving the opening led only into a hollow surrounded by rocky walls, passed through, and climbing over some scattered fragments of stone, at length obtained a view of the wood, and the gorge they had ascended the previous evening ; but his observations could not be extended farther, unless he mounted to a greater height, which he had been forbidden to do.

He felt a great inclination to transgress, and was looking out for a favourable spot for his ascent, when his eye was caught by some glittering objects in the wood below on which the sun shone ; watching keenly, he perceived these objects move, and he was satisfied that they were the pointed spears of the roving Africans, in all probability of the very tribe from whom they had fled.

He hastened to the opening to report his discovery below, whereupon the valiant Charles and the sagacious Mashall were sent up as a deputation to look into the fact. They selected a snug hiding-place from whence they could securely look down upon the mountain-path ; and saw, with their own eyes, the armed warriors already ascending it. When they came opposite the cave of the lioness, they stopped, and the well-known voice of the chief Chinguava was heard, commanding the cave to be searched.

Another moment, and roars, shrieks, and clashing spears, announced the event they expected; the lioness had sprung out on the intruders, seized a man and dragged him into the den. Then her mate, a monstrous lion, had appeared, prostrated another of the warriors, and was now standing over him, growling, lashing his tail, and displaying his large teeth, as his fiery eyes glanced round on his foes, some of whom had fled up the mountain, others had surrounded the chief to protect him, and await his commands, and some were stealing round among the bushes to attack the animal in the rear; while the groans of the man in the clutches of the beast showed that he still lived. Of the fate of the wretched victim of the lioness there could be no doubt, and the sentinels shuddered at the fearful catastrophe.

The next moment, the chief, in an imperious tone, summoned the fugitives, formed his men into a body, and, at the word, a volley of assegais were flung at the lion; he was wounded terribly, many of the assegais remaining fixed in his body; and, with tremendous roars, he sprung forward, and dashed down the mountain into the cover of the wood, followed by his mate, which had been drawn from her retreat and her banquet by his cries.

The Africans, apparently satisfied with the retreat of the animals, moved up the mountain, leaving the body of their wounded and groaning comrade extended on the path. When they reached the cleft, Chinguava paused till some of his men explored it; but finding no passage, nor any appearance of booty, they went forward through the pass. All this transaction occupied but a few minutes; and though the sentinels were relieved when the foe passed their very threshold

without suspicion, yet Marshall did not like that this vindictive chief should be before them.

They descended to the cave to give this alarming adventure, which produced an exclamation—"We must not leave this wretch to the mercy of the wild beast."

"God forbid!" said Mr. Grey; "at all events, we must endeavour to save him."

"It must be at great risk," said Mr. Grey. "God knows, my blood ran cold when heathen left; and I, for one, will not go in. But some of you must keep the entrance, and be ready to close it, if that the enemy are in sight. We are sacrificed."

Charles insisted on being the smallest, Edmund again ascended to watch being lowered, the two kind-hearted men in the litter to assist their fellow-creature. To the advantage of the opportunity of getting bowls and buckets with fresh water, now he necessarily detained another. When she had finished, the litter arrived, and was transferred to the care of Dr. Charles Kennerly. They found the arm and part man dreadfully torn; but as not injured, the doctor indulged in a hope of recovery. The wounds were washed and carefully bound up, and the man, from loss of blood, sunk into a doze.

"Well, Captain Stockport," said Charles, "are in a dead lock. What is to be the result?"

"Recollect, Mr. Staunton, this was not my move," answered the captain. "No, sir; I say that on the ocean you have no peril but the storm sent by Almighty God. On land every step you take teems with danger. Savage men and savage beasts war against you. Entangled in thickets, bewildered in deserts, arrested by mountains, and imprisoned by cowardly fears, life is a perpetual storm. If ever God permits me once more to step the quarter-deck, trust me, my good friends, I will lose sight of the green ocean no more."

"I feel for you, Captain Stockport," said Mrs. Churchill, "for you are literally out of your element; but I cannot agree with you. I feel safer standing on the earth that God has made, than on the frail vessel which is but the work of man."

"On sea or land we are alike in his hands," said Mr. Grey, "and every trial he sends is a special mercy. Let us not distrust His wisdom, my dear friends, but resign ourselves to a delay which may prove a blessing. Here is work for all," pointing to the sleeping savage.

"Will it be the tay-wather ye're maning, docther?" said Norah; "sorra a bit more help can I give the spalpeen."

But the savage, when he awoke, made wry faces at Norah's "tay-wather," and preferred the unsophisticated element. He scowled at Mr. Grey's discourses, and rebelled against Dr. Cameron's bandages and applications; and it was not till after some hours of restless tossing on his bed of dried grass, that he lent an ear to Miss Keenmark's soft voice, entreating him to take the prescribed remedies, or he must die.

"I know it," he said; "why should not the warrior

die? The yellow flower of the acacia droops and dies; the tree grows old and hollow, and falls at last. I must die like the flower, not like the aged tree. All things die."

"The flower and the tree die for ever," answered Miss Keenmark, "but man lives for ever. The life you now feel will leave your body only to be brought before the Great Spirit who made you, and who will ask you what good you have done on earth."

"Is that true?" asked the man, after a pause. "Then will I say to the Great Spirit . . . I have slain many enemies . . . I have burnt many kraals . . . I have killed the great *Maclou*, and the sons of man-eating *Tao* . . . but the father found me at last, and took vengeance."

"But the Great God would send you away from him for ever," replied Miss Keenmark, "if you came to him stained with the blood of your brother man. He commands men to love one another, as He loves all the world."

This peaceful doctrine was repugnant to every habit and feeling of the wild warrior; and Mr. Grey saw that there was, indeed, much work for all, and much need of God's aid, before that heathen soul could be brought into the fold.

As the day drew on, and no sound was heard of the warriors returning, a little uneasiness pervaded the circle, and from time to time a sentinel mounted the roof to look round; but nothing living was seen, except the graceful zebras bounding down the mountain, or a row of noisy baboons grinning hideously on some crag. The active men loathed this dismal confinement; they rolled fragments of rock to form separate divisions of the spacious cave; but still time moved heavily.

However they were interrupted in their labours by Edmund looking down from above to announce that the distant sound of cries had reached him.

Glad of any pretext to escape from the cave, Charles and Albert followed Marshall to the observatory, while those left below fortified the entrance still more strongly. The watchers crouched into secure hiding-places, where they could command the view up and down the pass; but though a confused noise was heard, nothing was yet seen of the barbarians. At length, the returning tribe of Chinguava were seen hurrying in a disordered flight down the steep. The chief appeared last, waving his spear, and calling loudly and indignantly to his flying troop; but his attempts to rally them were vain, and slowly and reluctantly he followed them. But the next minute another body of tall warriors, wearing black plumes on their heads, appeared in pursuit, armed with long spears, and with bows, from which they discharged showers of arrows after the fugitives.

"Halloo!" cried Charles, "this is no joke," as an ill-directed arrow fell into the hollow where the spies were lurking. "But, see, the plumed heroes are charging at the poltroons spear in hand; fine-looking fellows they are! Now the battle rages hot; I am all for the new people; and fierce as they look, I would trust them, unknown, sooner than the base, cowardly robbers they oppose."

"They fight fair, Mr. Beaumont," said Marshall, "and that's more than can be said of the black rascals that stole our boat. There falls the robber chief! and no loss either; and see, sir, the cowards are throwing down their arms to surrender."

"What will become of them?" asked Edmund.

"There's no question about that, Master Edmund," answered Marshall ; "they'll be knocked down to the highest bidder at Inhambane or Sofala, and be shipped off to the Brazils, or to Virginia. God help them, they'd better die at once than be crammed down in the steaming hold of a slaver, worse than cattle in a slaughter-house."

A few minutes after, all the prisoners, wounded or unwounded, that were able to walk, were driven before their proud conquerors, manacled in couples, up the pass, and the sentinels lost sight of them.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Field of Battle. The Death of Chinguava. The first Breath of the Indian Ocean. A Visit to a Friendly Tribe. The Chief Marka. Arrangements for an easy Journey to Inhambane.

THE sentinels looked down on the deserted scene of conflict, and saw five or six bodies stretched on the ground, left uncared for, to be devoured by savage beasts. They were all silent for a few minutes, then Edmund said, "Albert, we are not savages. Let us go out and bury the dead, and, if it be not too late, assist the wounded."

"I wish to do so, my dear boy," answered Albert, "but prudence made me pause, perhaps longer than I ought to have done; now we will descend. You must remain to tell the story of the battle to our anxious friends, for we must take out stronger hands for our work."

In a few minutes more the entrance was again opened, and a party went out to the field of battle. They found four men quite dead, and two, one of whom was the chief, severely wounded; and in an insensible state they were removed to the cave and the care of Dr. Cameron, while the dead were placed in a hollow in the rock, and covered with large stones to secure them from the wild beasts.

All this was accomplished, and the retreat again secured, without disturbance. The chief was restored to consciousness to see with amazement the well-known features of his fugitive guests, and above all, to see

them performing the duties of hospitality to him who had so basely deceived them. He heard, without uttering a word, the inquiries and injunctions of Dr. Cameron, and the admonitions and prayers of Mr. Grey; he seemed to be as indifferent about his own life as he had been to that of others. His wounds were not deep, nor apparently dangerous; but their inflamed appearance induced the doctor to suspect that the arrows had been poisoned. Both Diego and Mataban said that it was well known that the coast tribes always used poisoned weapons in battle, and Dr. Cameron shook his head, for he could prescribe no antidote to an unknown poison. The other savage was already raving with fever; Miss Keenmark had washed his wounds, and now approached to assist in performing the same good office to the no-longer terrible chief.

"Woman, do not touch me!" cried he, in a hoarse tone. "Death is in my veins: water cannot wash away this juice," taking up one of the long arrows which had been drawn from his shoulder, and touching the sharp bone point. "I shall be dead before the sun rises again; but they have not made me a slave."

"You are not fit to die, chief," said the persevering woman. "You would die, because life has no longer a charm for you; but there is another life, a life of happiness to the pure of heart. You know this well, chief, and your sins may yet be pardoned. Now listen to the holy prayers of our good priest, and try to join in them, for the Great God of Heaven is in this place."

The dying man started and looked round fearfully. Then while all those assembled devoutly kneeled, Mr. Grey offered up a prayer in the Sichuana tongue for the crime-laden soul of the dying sinner. The

young girls wept bitterly as they lifted up their hands and hearts, and the chief looked on them with some appearance of emotion ; then groaned deeply, and said to Mr. Grey : "Talk again to the Great Spirit. Ask Him to change me to the brave white man. I am no longer the Chief Chinguava ; I cannot fight more, for my warriors chose to be slaves."

The prostrated tyrant was not deficient in understanding ; he had long comprehended the beautiful doctrines of Christian salvation ; but in his pride of power, was reluctant to abandon his cruel and predatory habits. Now, vanquished and dying, his spirit was humbled, and he lent his ear to the promises of pardon and peace. Through the long night Mr. Grey continued his exhortations and prayers, assisted by Miss Keenmark ; and while Dr. Cameron administered such relief to his physical suffering as his fearful state demanded, water to his parched lips, to Mr. Grey it belonged to soothe his agonized spirit ; and when the morning sun fell on his swollen and disfigured corpse, the good priest humbly hoped that mercy had visited his soul.

The man brought in with the chief had died soon after ; but the sight of all this suffering, and the words and prayers of Mr. Grey and Miss Keenmark, had so softened the heart of Koondava, the man torn by the lion, that he declared he would kill no more men, and begged that he might be made a Christian ; and Mr. Grey resolved that, after due instruction, this wandering sheep should be admitted into the fold of Christ.

Early in the morning a stony sepulchre was sought for the two Africans ; then the question of immediate departure arose. The timid feared to leave

a place of security ; but Margaret said, "Even I am not afraid, Mr. Pinchard. The conquerors will have led their slaves to some settlement for sale ; and if we should encounter women or peaceful men, we will win their favour with gifts. Do let us go, Captain Stockport."

"I second your motion, my brave girl," said Dr. Cameron. "I like not the atmosphere of this cave, especially since last night, and as Koondava's legs are sound, we are all in condition to travel. What say you, commodore ?"

"I say, doctor, spread every sail !" answered Captain Stockport. "Let us leave this dull port ; I shall be another man when I feel the fresh sea-breeze."

"And the breakfast, and the tay-coffee ?" inquired Norah anxiously.

"We have no appetite to breakfast in the cave ; let us leave this melancholy spot without delay," said Mrs. Churchill.

"But not ungratefully, madam," said Mr. Grey. "These gloomy walls have sheltered us from peril, and enabled us, by God's blessing, to sow good seed in at least one heart."

The knapsacks were strapped, the litter and its bearers arranged, and the valuable baskets borne off ; then the stone was replaced before the cave of refuge, to prevent its becoming the den of wild beasts ; and the party being all arranged in order, Captain Stockport gladly cried out, "March !" With much exertion the heavily-laden party reached the highest point of the pass, from whence they looked down on a green and fertile plain, with a bright mountain-stream flowing across it. Broad fan-palms spreading their branches for shelter, tall acacias, and huge baobab-

trees, adorned the valley, and herds of graceful antelopes were feeding as tranquilly as if the destroying foot of war had never disturbed this solitude.

"Thank God for this peaceful prospect," said Mrs. Churchill; "though doubtless men will frequent this tempting spot in preference to the barren mountain or the dangerous forest."

"Assuredly they will, madam," replied Mr. Grey. "We must now expect to meet with the dwellings of men; but I trust not altogether savage men."

"Then I conclude that our adventures are over," said Julia. "We must now return to the decorum of neat dresses, combs and brushes, and grammar and arithmetic. How irksome it will all be!"

A gentle green descent conducted them to the smiling valley, where they moved along the banks of the rivulet till the spreading shade of a fig-tree allured them to rest and eat their breakfast, during which they were much amused with the antics of the monkeys,—the privileged inhabitants of the tree. These animals, taking some particular prejudice against Mr. Pinchard, united in pelting him with hard unripe figs, till the persecuted man was driven to the open plain, with many complaints, and suspicious glances at his companions, as if he had some idea that they had instigated the monkeys.

After a short repose they passed onwards, through forest-like scenery, — green glades and lofty trees, mingled with thorny shrubs, which formed thickets, the elephant's place of concealment, betrayed by the gigantic marks of his feet. The shades of evening found them at the foot of a range of low hills, under the protection of which they lighted their fires and bivouacked for the night, with no other disturbance

than the usual nocturnal concert of the wild animals which were kept at a distance by the fires.

Even before sunrise the anxious travellers were ready for another day's march ; nor would the litter-bearers seek to penetrate the range by some ravine, so eager were they to arrive at their destination ; but, preceded by the young and light-footed, ascended the hill. Murmurs of admiration were heard from those who first reached the summit, as another rich scene burst upon them ; and when Captain Stockport joined them, he actually waved his hat, for he declared he smelt the fragrant breeze from the ocean. This was confirmed by all the keen-scented, and filled them with cheering hopes. The fertile plain below, covered with grazing herds, was certainly a pleasant prospect ; but as the increasing light fell upon it, Albert thought there was a startling appearance of cultivation, and that the distant herds looked much like domestic animals.

On examining Elliott's plan of the route, they found this spot, distinguished by the ridge of hills marked, "Friendly tribe at the north ; beads and needles highly valued ; but if you want to avoid them, file off to the right."

"If they are friendly people," said Margaret, "I do not see why we should avoid them. A few needles would make them happy. They would do us no harm, and we might do them good."

"I consider the directions on the chart to be prudent," said Captain Stockport. "I must therefore request Mr. Marshall to steer a point to the south."

"I hardly think we can make a run of it, captain," answered Marshall ; "for I see the smoke rising over the trees away north."

"Crowd all sail," ordered the commander, and with as much expedition as they could, they followed Marshall, the cautious and watchful leader, down the slope, and over the soft turf, observing that plots of ground lying to the left were fenced with thorns, and bearing crops of maize and vegetables, while flocks of goats and herds of oxen grazed on the rich pasture.

After proceeding a short distance without meeting with any inhabitants, they began to hope they should pass unnoticed, when they saw, certainly not without much agitation, a mixed crowd of natives rapidly approaching them from the left. To attempt flight would have been imprudent and unavailing; they therefore halted at the word of command; the men formed in front, and the women, with much anxiety and some curiosity, remained behind, while Mr. Pinchard, with some expense of skin and raiment, crept beneath a thorn-bush.

When the strangers saw they were waited for, they paused, and came forward in some order; a number of tall well-formed men formed the first rank, wearing a sort of tunic of striped calico, and carrying bows in their hands, and quivers over their shoulders. They were led by a chief distinguished by a large plume of white ostrich-feathers on his head, which drooped over one shoulder, and by an immense number of brass rings or bangles round his legs and arms. The chattering of women and the screams of children in the rear announced their presence before they were seen.

Albert and Marshall, the usual ambassadors, walked boldly forward, and saluted the chief, an intelligent-looking man, with features which showed more Arab than negro blood in his veins. He bowed in return, raising one arm over his head, and folding the other

with some dignity over his breast. He then, in a few words of barbarous Portuguese, demanded the business of the white people in his country.

Albert answered in the Sichuana tongue, common to all the tribes to the east, and found he was understood. He told the chief they were unfortunate travellers, who had been robbed and imprisoned by a savage tribe to the west, from whom they had escaped, and were now making their way to Inhambane to join their friends.

"Your friends are the lying white men at the Fort," answered the chief. "I sell them ivory, and deal truly with them, but they send their people into my country to carry off my young men and women for slaves."

Albert explained to the chief that the men at the Fort, although white, were not his countrymen. He and his party were English, and belonged to a great nation, who bought no slaves, and always repaid the favours done to their people liberally.

Marshall, as the most skilful in traffic, now came forward, and requested to have a goat and some fowls, for which he offered payment in beads, handkerchiefs, or needles.

When the women heard the glad tidings, they could no longer be restrained, but broke through the ranks, and rushed forward with noisy demonstrations of admiration for the treasures they so much desired to possess. Some of the most active ran back to the kraal, and returned laden with fowls, melons, beans, and with honey in cocoa-nut shells. A packet of needles purchased an ample supply of these delicacies, and the chief was gratified by a present of some strings of red beads and a gaudy cotton handkerchief.

"Stay with us till we prepare a feast for you, generous strangers," said the chief. "We will kill a fat ox, and our women shall roast and boil large dishes of meat for our white friends."

"But we desire to pursue our journey without delay," said Albert.

"Yet remain this day," answered the chief, who was named, they found, Marka ; "to-morrow I will send you away with ivory, wax, and provisions. I will sell you strong oxen to carry your goods, your feeble men, and your wives, and I myself with some of my warriors will conduct you in safety to Inhambane."

Captain Stockport was at first reluctant ; but the offer was tempting, and he finally yielded to the entreaties of the weak and the idle, and it was agreed that the party should spend a day with their new friends. Marka then conducted them through groves of fruit-trees, rich in blossom or in immature fruits, beneath which were plots of wheat, millet, onions, cabbages, and beans, till they reached a large village or kraal, consisting of low scattered huts. At the head of the kraal stood a larger hut with a circle of smaller ones round it. This was the palace of the kingly chief, his wives occupying the dwellings round the court.

The appearance of the village was much neater than that of the tribe of Chinguava, and the people possessed iron and earthenware utensils, which proved their intercourse with European traders. Two large huts near that of Marka were given to the strangers ; they were close and gloomy, having no opening except the narrow entrance ; but the climate rendered the shelter of a house less needful than in Europe, and for one night all submitted cheerfully to small inconveniences.

"It's raal idle creaturs they are, these same niggers," said Norah. "Wisha! it'll not be in the memory of man that iver broom touched this same black floor, and me not mindin' how I will find one with these savages."

"I'se soon fettle ye up a broom, Norah," said John, collecting an armful of brushwood, which he fashioned into a convenient form for the purpose, and Norah cleansed the floor from dry leaves, bones, feathers, and much accumulated filth; and then, spreading over it dry grass, she assured the ladies it was now quite comfortable; and they were not sorry to retreat to it, to escape the questions, importunity, and curiosity of the native women, who handled their dresses, touched their faces, and teased Maude by pulling her fair ringlets, and laughing immoderately at her appearance.

In the mean time the fat cow was slain, and the cooks were busily engaged round their ovens in the open air in boiling, roasting, and broiling; while the chief, with Albert and Marshall, selected some strong oxen of burthen, and showed them the pack-saddles of skin which were to be devoted to their use. For this accommodation Marshall paid the chief liberally from Elliott's provident supplies, and both sides were satisfied.

The banquet was ready by the time the bargain was completed. Several mats were spread beneath the shade of a palm-tree for the guests and the great people of the party to recline upon. Then the women brought large wooden platters of meat, with smaller earthenware dishes of cooked vegetables, cakes of millet, dried fruits of various kinds, milk and honey; and the strangers, amusing their hosts very much by using their own forks and spoons, made a plentiful

repast, and seemed now to feel no regret that they had been tempted to take a day of rest.

When Mr. Grey reverently bowed his head, and pronounced a thanksgiving after they had eaten, the chief said, in a sarcastic tone : " White men talk very often with the great unseen Spirit. Does He say to them, ' Flog the dark man . . . rob the dark man . . . kill the dark man . . . the dark man is but the slave of the white man ? ' "

" Not so, my son," answered Mr. Grey. " Listen to me ; our great God loved men so much, that He came to the earth in the form of a man Himself, to talk to them, to teach them, to save them from everlasting death. He said, ' Love one another.' . . . All men are brothers. . . . All are the children of God, if they love Him, and obey His will. And after they die on earth, all His children shall live again for ever with Him in peace and love. Pain and sickness, grief and want, visit all men on earth ; but God says to them, ' Come to me, and I will give you rest.' "

" And why do not all white men love their brothers, that they may live for ever with God ? " asked Marka.

" Alas ! my dear brother," answered Mr. Grey, " all the men on earth are weak and disobedient, if they do not every hour pray to God to make them strong to do His will. If men forget this duty,—if they turn away from God, they become cruel, liars, robbers, murderers. God hides his face from those who forget Him."

" Pray for me, also, good man," said the chief, " that I may see God. I would not be a false white trader. I would not be a fierce and bloody *Vatwah*. I would be, as you are, a man who lives with God ! "

Mr. Grey talked long and seriously with the intel-

ligent chief, who had frequently heard discourses on the Christian religion on his visits to the coast ; but, disgusted, as many of the simple Africans are, with the craft, the cruelty, and the treachery of the merchants and slave-dealers, he associated their evil deeds with their professed faith ; and it required all the fervid eloquence of Mr. Grey to point out to him the perfection of Christianity—the imperfection of humanity ; and the good man trusted his labour was not in vain.

The day was concluded with dancing, singing, and innocent amusements ; and it was arranged that, at early dawn, the travellers should set out, accompanied by Marka and four of his men, all he could venture to withdraw from the village, as a considerable body of his people had gone down to Inhambane a few days before, with a large drove of cattle for sale.

Before they separated for the night, Mr. Grey performed the evening service in the open air, surrounded by the wondering, ignorant, but not irreverent natives ; the chief set them the example of kneeling as the Christians knelt, which his people imitated, and the good priest concluded by a simple prayer in the Sichuana tongue, intelligible to all ; then, shaking hands, they retired cheerfully into their separate huts.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A Night-Attack. The Flight of the People. Old Friends. The Battle and the Victory. Elliott's Plans. The Missionary's Home. Inhambane. Conclusion.

SECURE within the huts, and fatigued with the exertions of the day, the European party did not trouble themselves to keep a night-watch, but slept in peace for some hours, till they were suddenly and fearfully roused by hideous yells and shrieks.

They rushed out from the hut, and saw by the light of the stars a large body of dark men, with glittering spears, approaching the kraal, evidently with hostile intentions. The peaceful inhabitants, who needed no preparation, were already in the field, for the almost hopeless purpose of defending their lives and property against this swarm of fierce marauders. A shower of assegais from the invaders was answered by a flight of arrows, and groans and shrieks proclaimed that both had been effectual.

"Arm ! arm !" cried Captain Stockport ; " we must assist our friends."

" And what must we do ?" asked Mrs. Churchill, issuing from the hut ; " I beseech you, Captain Stockport—Albert—give me a word of counsel ; what shall I do with my helpless charge ?"

There was a momentary silence, as they rapidly collected arms and cartridges ; then Albert said, " Dr. Cameron and Mr. Grey, to you we leave this care. If, as I dread, our friends should be lost, retreat, if possible, to the spot where we encamped last night.

There, if we live, we will join you ; if not, we leave all to your discretion and God's mercy."

There was no time for more words ; the volunteers were in a moment at the side of the chief, and a volley from their guns carried terror and destruction among the enemy, who gave way for a short time, but rallied again east of the kraal. In the mean time the chief said to Albert, " Our wives have all fled to hide themselves in the woods. Let your women also follow them quickly, or they will be killed before your eyes."

Albert darted to the hut, gave such directions as time permitted, took an agitated farewell, and saw the weeping train, of which Mr. Pinchard formed one, steal cautiously away among the trees, in a direction opposite to the enemy ; and then, with Edmund, who resolutely refused to accompany the women, and bore a gun like the rest of his friends, returned to the battle.

A second shower of assegais was followed by loud yells from the Vatwaha, and the whole body, armed with long glittering spears, and defended by large shields, charged upon the brave little phalanx. They were received with another round of shots ; but, alas ! though every bullet had its victim, the charge was supported, and spears and assegais mowed down the resolute but slender band who surrounded their beloved chief.

Many an anxious glance was thrown back by the fugitives on the fatal field ; for the wadding of a gun had fired a thicket near the Vatwaha, which blazed up, and showed the dense mass of dark forms pressing forward in the bloody strife. Having abandoned everything, the women were unincumbered, and fled quickly over the plain, Mr. Grey, supported between Mr. Pinchard and Dr. Cameron, slowly following.

Crossing the hills they had left the preceding morning, they descended to the spot yet marked by the traces of their fires, where they had encamped in peace and hope but a few hours before. Here they remained for a short time in painful suspense, in tears, and in earnest prayer. Then Margaret, unable to restrain her anxiety, accompanied by Dr. Cameron ascended the hill, to look once more on the battle-field.

They saw below a confused mass of figures, the flashing of the guns, and the glittering of spears, which a faint light in the east now made more visible; while they heard, mingled with the report of fire-arms, shrieks, and cries of mixed triumph, defiance, and agony—a fearful whole, striking terror on the minds of the beholder.

“They are getting nearer to the village,” cried Margaret. “Alas! I fear our brave little party are losing ground! May God protect our dear and noble friends!”

Dr. Cameron was silent; he was greatly moved at the sad prospect, when suddenly Margaret exclaimed, “Dr. Cameron, I hear the voice of dear Elliott!” and springing down the hill, followed more soberly by the good doctor, they found, indeed, Elliott and a large party collected at the encampment, and greetings and embraces for a moment made them forget the surrounding danger. “Draw up your forces quickly, dear Elliott,” said Margaret, “and set out to help our friends, who are fighting against the barbarous Watwaha.”

A few words of explanation were sufficient. In fact, Captain Elliott’s party had been awaked and alarmed, at their encampment at a short distance, by the noise of the conflict. Besides Elliott, Hubert, and Mayetta,

a place of security; but Margaret said, "Even I am not afraid, Mr. Pinchard. The conquerors will have led their slaves to some settlement for sale; and if we should encounter women or peaceful men, we will win their favour with gifts. Do let us go, Captain Stockport."

"I second your motion, my brave girl," said Dr. Cameron. "I like not the atmosphere of this cave, especially since last night, and as Koondava's legs are sound, we are all in condition to travel. What say you, commodore?"

"I say, doctor, spread every sail!" answered Captain Stockport. "Let us leave this dull port; I shall be another man when I feel the fresh sea-breeze."

"And the breakfast, and the tay-coffee?" inquired Norah anxiously.

"We have no appetite to breakfast in the cave; let us leave this melancholy spot without delay," said Mrs. Churchill.

"But not ungratefully, madam," said Mr. Grey. "These gloomy walls have sheltered us from peril, and enabled us, by God's blessing, to sow good seed in at least one heart."

The knapsacks were strapped, the litter and its bearers arranged, and the valuable baskets borne off; then the stone was replaced before the cave of refuge, to prevent its becoming the den of wild beasts; and the party being all arranged in order, Captain Stockport gladly cried out, "March!" With much exertion the heavily-laden party reached the highest point of the pass, from whence they looked down on a green and fertile plain, with a bright mountain-stream flowing across it. Broad fan-palms spreading their branches for shelter, tall acacias, and huge baobab-

trees, adorned the valley, and herds of graceful antelopes were feeding as tranquilly as if the destroying foot of war had never disturbed this solitude.

"Thank God for this peaceful prospect," said Mrs. Churchill ; "though doubtless men will frequent this tempting spot in preference to the barren mountain or the dangerous forest."

"Assuredly they will, madam," replied Mr. Grey. "We must now expect to meet with the dwellings of men ; but I trust not altogether savage men."

"Then I conclude that our adventures are over," said Julia. "We must now return to the decorum of neat dresses, combs and brushes, and grammar and arithmetic. How irksome it will all be !"

A gentle green descent conducted them to the smiling valley, where they moved along the banks of the rivulet till the spreading shade of a fig-tree allured them to rest and eat their breakfast, during which they were much amused with the antics of the monkeys,—the privileged inhabitants of the tree. These animals, taking some particular prejudice against Mr. Pinchard, united in pelting him with hard unripe figs, till the persecuted man was driven to the open plain, with many complaints, and suspicious glances at his companions, as if he had some idea that they had instigated the monkeys.

After a short repose they passed onwards, through forest-like scenery, — green glades and lofty trees, mingled with thorny shrubs, which formed thickets, the elephant's place of concealment, betrayed by the gigantic marks of his feet. The shades of evening found them at the foot of a range of low hills, under the protection of which they lighted their fires and bivouacked for the night, with no other disturbance

dead. Of the number of wretched natives untimely sent to their doom I dare not think : may God pardon all concerned in this bloody strife !”

“ But, Albert, dear Albert !” cried Maude, “ are we safe now ? Will not those ferocious savages return and slay us ? ”

“ We are safe, I believe, Maude,” replied he, “ Those wild robbers rarely venture to attack the brave tribes near the coast ; but, doubtless, the discovery that a large portion were absent at Inhambane tempted them to this outrage. They have been defeated signally, and, in all probability, will return no more. Now, Miss Keenmark, Dr. Cameron is calling for your useful services ; and, God knows, when we look round this field, there is work provided for us all.”

And all were ready to work : the wounded were taken to the huts, and carefully attended ; the dead were removed to some distance, and buried. Old and young lent their services, in the midst of which Charles came hastily to Dr. Cameron, saying, “ Come with me, doctor, the chief’s young wife declares that he is not dead ; she has sucked the wound in his breast, lest the assegai should have been poisoned, and has dressed it with leaves, and the man certainly breathes now.”

Not because Marka was a great man, but because his case was the most dangerous, Dr. Cameron left some of his suffering patients to the care of Miss Keenmark, and proceeded to the hut to which Albert had carried, as he believed, the dead body of the chief. He had borne him in his arms from the time he received the wound till he became insensible, and had conveyed to Mr. Grey the last message of the faithful warrior. “ Tell the good father that I believe all his words : tell him I now see God.”

Dr. Cameron found the simple application used by the woman had been efficacious in stanching the flow of blood, and he trusted, though the wound was deep, no vital part was touched,—his only dread was of poison ; but the Africans assured him that the effects would have been visible before this time if the poison had entered the blood. He dressed the wound, and the sufferer revived, looked round in astonishment, and attempted in vain to speak ; Charles whispered to him, " Victory !" on which he smiled, closed his eyes, and fell asleep.

Leaving Margaret to assist the chieftain's wife to nurse, the doctor returned to his painful duties ; but many hours elapsed before all the wounded on both sides were attended to, and order restored to this scene of desolation. Edmund had merely received an arrow in his arm, and the injury was slight ; but Mataban was wounded in the breast and in the face ; fever came on, and incessant care and attention were necessary.

All hopes of moving forward at present were vain. Mr. Grey, in his pious labours, forgot his disappointment ; the women were so much interested in the care of the wounded, and Charles and Albert had so much pleasure in listening to Elliott's cheerful details, that the time passed imperceptibly.

" You can have no idea, my dear fellows," said Elliott, " how well we got on with our strange cattle ; every day they became more tractable ; Mayetta was a capital guide and a keen sentinel, and our rations held out miraculously ; still I cannot say but that I was cheered when we fell upon our old dismal track on the karroo, for I knew my ground then. Mayetta found out for us now and then a little muddy pool, politely called a fountain, so that we did not altogether

perish of thirst, though, before we reached the land of grass, our tongues lolled from our mouths like those of panting hounds after a long chase. Then, in defiance of Mayetta's proposed short cuts, I would persist in following the track till we came up to the wreck of the dear old waggon, when I began to whistle 'Sweet home' so pathetically, that Hubert turned away, I suspect, to wipe his eyes.

"After all, the waggon made us a capital lodging for the night, we cooked our meat at the old stove, found some eatables still fit for use, replenished our shot-bags, and changed our dilapidated garments, helping ourselves to the best. I had now entered *le pays de connaissance*, and we started next morning on my old waggon-track, and made our way famously, shooting an eland or a springbok when we wanted a dinner, and putting the few wandering bushmen we encountered to flight in terror at our strange appearance, or with a flash of our rifles. Thus, with a few whimsical adventures among the Dutch boors, which we will reserve for 'the voyage,' we reached the land of civilization, where our cash, so long useless, enabled us to purchase horses, and some decent garments; but we did not part with our four-footed friends; we hired two Hottentots to conduct them, laden with our bags, to Cape Town, where we were welcomed as men risen from the dead.

"I had taken the precaution to send a swift, mounted messenger on before us, to prepare Colonel Churchill for our good news; and though still deeply anxious, he met us full of hope, and eager for action. Before a week passed, truant soldiers as we had been to her majesty, our leave was graciously renewed, and off we set, ready for any adventure, and,

thank God, our success has been more complete than I expected.

"But now, Mrs. Churchill, do you think we ought to keep our good, pious preserver in suspense, when we are but a day's journey from the Fort? The chief would die at the very thought of parting with him just now; what do you say if Charles and I were to take a run down, and bring up his womankind to comfort him in his toils?"

"Is it possible that it can be done?" said she.

"Certainly, my dear madam," answered he. "We can perch them each on a strong mule, and bring them cleverly up in a day. There is nothing to fear, for the poor inhabitants near Inhambane are quiet and well-behaved, about three-quarters civilized."

"Go at once, Captain Elliott," said Mrs. Churchill. "You are a kind-hearted young man, and God will bless you."

The project was not named to Mr. Grey, but early next morning the two friends set out on their benevolent mission; and for the two following days, those who were in the secret felt much anxiety. In this time the wound of the chief had assumed a decidedly favourable appearance; but it was certain his recovery must be slow. Attended constantly by Mr. Grey, or Miss Keenmark, the clouds of error gradually dispersed from his mind, and, by God's grace, he became in heart a true Christian. The interest Mr. Grey felt in his spiritual welfare was intense, for he saw that this conversion might happily bring the whole tribe into the fold of Christ. Scarcely remembering his own sorrows, what was the wonder and delight of the good man when Miss Keenmark, in much agitation, entered the hut, and cautiously

revealed to him the good tidings that his wife and children had arrived at the village.

As a fellow-sufferer in this world of trial, Mrs. Churchill, with tears of joy, had welcomed the elegant and accomplished Mrs. Grey, with her two lovely daughters, to the lowly hut where the will of God had doomed them to meet ; and before Mr. Grey, supported by the strong arms of his young friends, had reached them, the ladies had become as familiar as old acquaintances ; but all withdrew from the hut to leave the long-parted to their meeting of happiness.

Next day all the patients were progressing so favourably, that Captain Stockport could no longer repress his impatience, but signified to Dr. Cameron that it was his desire to put off immediately for the coast while the wind was fair. Even the claims of humanity exacted no more from the charitable, and all felt that the moment of departure should not be longer deferred.

All but the Chief Marka ; he raised his feeble frame and said, "Leave me not, good father, stay and finish your work of love. Stay with your fair wife and children ; my people shall build you large huts like those of white men ; they shall plant gardens for you, hunt for you, and cook your food. Make my people all Christians, and let us meet when the sun rises and sets, to pray to the great God."

"I have thought of this," said Mr. Grey to Albert ; "I have even named it to my wife, and she bows to the will of God. We left our native country to fulfil a sacred calling, we have done little yet ; but here a wide field is spread before us, and the voice of God calls on us to make the desert to blossom."

Albert was startled at this plan of self-devotion,

and would have remonstrated with him; but when the rest of the party were made acquainted with Mr. Grey's determination, Mrs. Churchill said, "Let no one forbid it! The hand of God is in it. When this good work is perfected, it may be that our good friends may be permitted to rejoin us; in this hope we will bid them farewell, praying that our course of life may be as blessed as theirs."

Mataban was yet unable to be moved, nor did he wish it. At his own request he and his family were left to be the servants of their good pastor, under the protection of the chief, who promised to provide for them.

They parted with many tears, and the homeward bound took the road to the coast mounted on mules and pack-oxen, and enjoying their journey over the beautiful country that spreads to the coast, the peaceful natives crowding about them as they passed, to offer fowls, vegetables, and eggs in profusion.

"And none in life did it please ye to bring us," said Norah, "when it was in need we were, and atin the poor lane parrots, and otherwise, flesh mate by no manes nat'ral to Christians. Save us!"

But they had already been bountifully provided with provision by the grateful tribe of Marka, and made little delay on the journey. Before night the eyes of the travellers were greeted by the sight of houses built by civilized man; and they were met at the gates of the fort by the polite governor, and welcomed hospitably into his spacious, handsome, and well-ordered mansion.

"I shall never be able to sit to a table and eat my dinner with the decorum that will satisfy Miss Keenmark," said Julia; "and when I have to sleep in a bed, with all its proper equipments, and to dress with

a well arranged toilette, I shall feel as awkward as Peronella transformed into a queen."

But the habits of social life were not forgotten ; and though Miss Keenmark certainly thought her pupils spoke in too loud a tone, with too much decision, and rather too often ; she only sighed, and secretly planned many salutary reforms, to be carried into effect when she should once more resume the reins of government.

Books, writing materials, useful tools, and every convenience that Inhambane could supply, were purchased, and a large waggon loaded and sent off the next day to Mr. Grey ; and the governor and Mrs. Grey's friend, the merchant, were requested to provide any supplies the good priest might need, and draw on Colonel Churchill for payment. Special gifts were sent to their friends by the girls ; and Hubert, who had refilled his purse at the Cape, purchased a handsome Spanish guitar, as a present for Mary Grey."

"As soon as I am of age," said he to his sister, "and have got my captaincy, I seriously think of returning here to marry the pretty Mary Grey."

Maude laughed at her brother's grave project, and declared that she hoped, before that long period had elapsed, the dear Greys might have joined them at Cape Town. "But, above all, Hubert," added she, "you surely do not mean to be faithless to Julia, so often as you have vowed your devotion to her."

"The truth is, I think she likes Elliott better than me," answered he ; "but I wish to be honourable, Maude ; and, as my mind is not quite made up, you had better say nothing about it."

"I shall certainly not, Hubert," answered Maude ; "and I think we had better all wait till we are of age, before we make up our minds on such matters."

Two days after, the steam-vessel *Algoa*, engaged by Colonel Churchill, came in sight, and the final preparations were made. All the scanty relics of previous adventures were carefully collected; skins, ostrich-shell bowls, and wooden platters, endeared by associations, were preserved, to illustrate the wonderful adventures of the family of Colonel Churchill. Before they embarked, the waggon returned from the kraal, with letters full of satisfaction and hope from the Greys; and from the grateful chief, as gifts to his friends, skins, ivory, assegais, bows, and other curiosities.

A vessel bound to Madras touched at Inhambane before the *Algoa* sailed, and by the advice of Captain Stockport, Mr. Pinchard consented to embark in it, his companions in trial contributing to his necessities and comforts liberally, and not unwilling to escape from his querulous humours; but, at the last moment, the poor man was deeply affected, and wept bitterly on parting with his forbearing and generous friends.

The Portuguese governor undertook to secure a comfortable berth for Diego in the first vessel to Rio, as the faithful man desired nothing so much as to die in the service of his kind mistress and her family, and to bear to them the details of his master's melancholy fate.

Once more upon the sea, to Captain Stockport's great satisfaction, a pleasant voyage in the commodious steam-vessel soon brought the lost travellers to Cape Town;—a happy meeting of unmixed pleasure succeeded.

Little more need be added. The soldiers were glad to return to their duties, the young ladies to return to society. Miss Keenmark rejoiced to resume her

